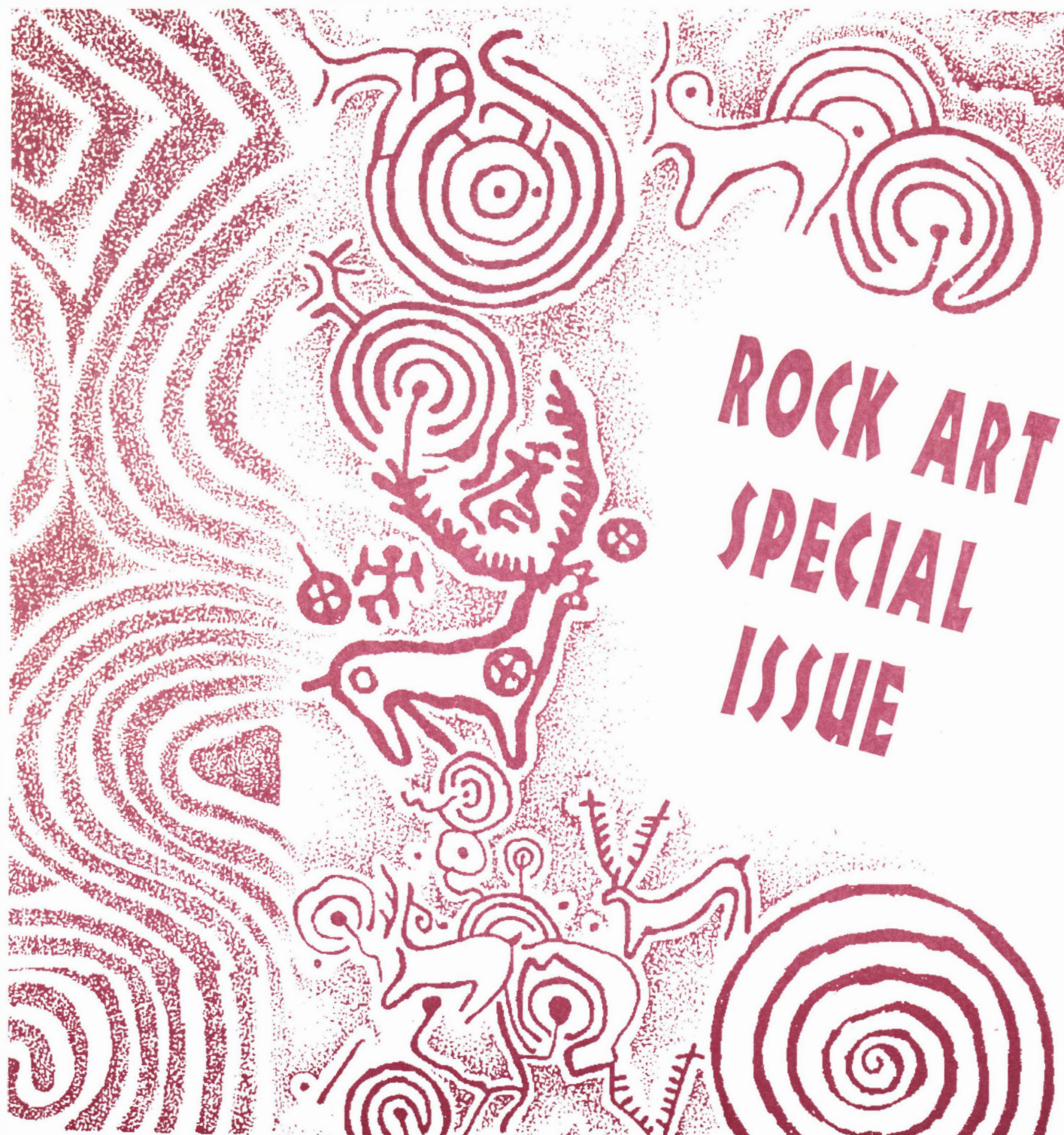


AT THE EDGE

Exploring new
interpretations of
past and place in
archaeology, folklore
and mythology

No.8 December 1997

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ROCK ART
SPECIAL
ISSUE

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The Altering State of Rock Art Research

World-wide it is estimated that there are at least 150 major areas of rock art - where a major area is defined as having over 10,000 motifs in a area of less than 1,000 sq. km. Examples of rock art can be dated to different eras spanning at least 40,000 years. Yet this wealth has been all-but ignored by academics - the apparently healthy activity in rock art research is almost entirely by 'avocational' researchers.

The decorative motifs and symbols used in rock art are often ambiguous or abstract. 'Rock art' is an unfortunate term and some prefer to use such terms as 'petroglyphs' to avoid any implication that we are studying something that is primarily aesthetic. Furthermore, the term 'rock art' has at least two different meanings. For some people it means motifs carved or scratched into the rock surface. For others it also embraces images painted on to rock surfaces (invariably within caves or 'rock shelters' if they are to survive the first rain storm). Recently in America, motifs associated with the local carved rock art have been also been found preserved on the mud-covered walls of remote caves - leading to the neologism 'mud glyphs'. In this article I will use the term 'rock art' as an all-embracing term - in Europe this mostly means carved stones, whereas in Africa and the Americas painted images predominate.

The time scale encompassed by rock art is vast. In America, Australia, Africa and elsewhere there were many societies who were creating rock art at the time of colonial contact, and which may be the continuation of practices stretching back many hundreds of years. Indeed, a few traditional societies still maintain and produce rock art. In Europe there is both Palaeolithic cave art and the characteristic Neolithic 'cup and ring marks' and associated motifs (British examples of rock art are distinct from other areas in that the images are almost entirely

abstract). Stan Beckensall's article in this issue of *At the Edge* deals in more detail with British rock art, so in this article I will concentrate on the rest of the world.

Although we have difficulty fully realising the implications, 'rock art' was only a small aspect of the 'art' created in the past. What has not survived are more widely used means of decoration such as body painting, house decoration, patterns on clothing, or even owners' marks on domesticated animals. And carved stone may originally have been more prevalent, as some types of rock are too friable to retain any evidence of decoration.

Academic disregard

For many decades there was a complete lack of interest by academics in rock art. The discovery and recording of rock art was, and is, especially attractive to amateurs because

it is less expensive than excavation and does not require either specialists or a large team. Unfortunately the 'professionalisation' of archaeology in the 60s and 70s led to rock art becoming 'entirely overlooked by those who had made [archaeology] their career'. This quote is taken from a full-length study of European rock art published last June - Professor Richard Bradley's *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe*.

While this book by a foremost figure in British archaeology is a major turning point in this area of study (see my review article elsewhere in this issue of *At the Edge*), it is not a bolt from the blue. Professor Bradley has for several years been steadily publishing a series of articles in academic journals relating to his ideas and these have taken their place alongside a flood of other articles on aspects of rock art throughout the world - indeed, a recent edition of *Antiquity* devotes several major articles to the subject.

There are two main reasons why academics previously shunned the subject. Firstly, rock art is almost invariably undatable by the usual methods of radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology, and only a small minority of examples are excavated in datable contexts. As a result, attempts to provide a chronology for rock art have depended on stylistic comparisons. Stylistic evidence shows that rock art varies

greatly from region to region - but such variations need external supporting evidence before chronologies can be created. Ethnographical evidence from societies still producing rock art suggests that different styles are made contemporaneously and that images can become both *more* complex or *less* complex over time. In other words, the fundamental assumptions of stylistic dating are not supported by what actually happens.

Secondly, rock art does not fit in with long-standing academic interests in prehistoric settlement sites or monuments. As Bradley states clearly in his new book, the study of rock art requires a new way of approaching prehistoric landscapes, where rock art is part of the 'archaeology of mobility' i.e. the places, paths and viewpoints associated with hunter-gathering societies. This essentially 'linear' world view lost significance when the enclosed spaces and continuous boundaries associated with stable mixed farming took over. Bradley's remarks refer to Neolithic Europe, but world-wide rock art is almost invariably associated with mobile, hunter-gathering lifestyles.

Altered States

Although there are exceptions, ethnographical fieldwork shows that hunter-gathering societies often have 'shamanistic' religions. While I will return to the uncertainty with which the term 'shamanism' is used by archaeologists - and others - for the moment it is sufficient to say that shamanism is closely linked with trance-like states. And this is where the fun begins. Early suggestions that some rock art incorporated motifs experienced spontaneously during trance states were treated with critical scorn [1]. But, by the mid-90s, nearly every academic paper on rock art is claiming evidence for imagery created under altered

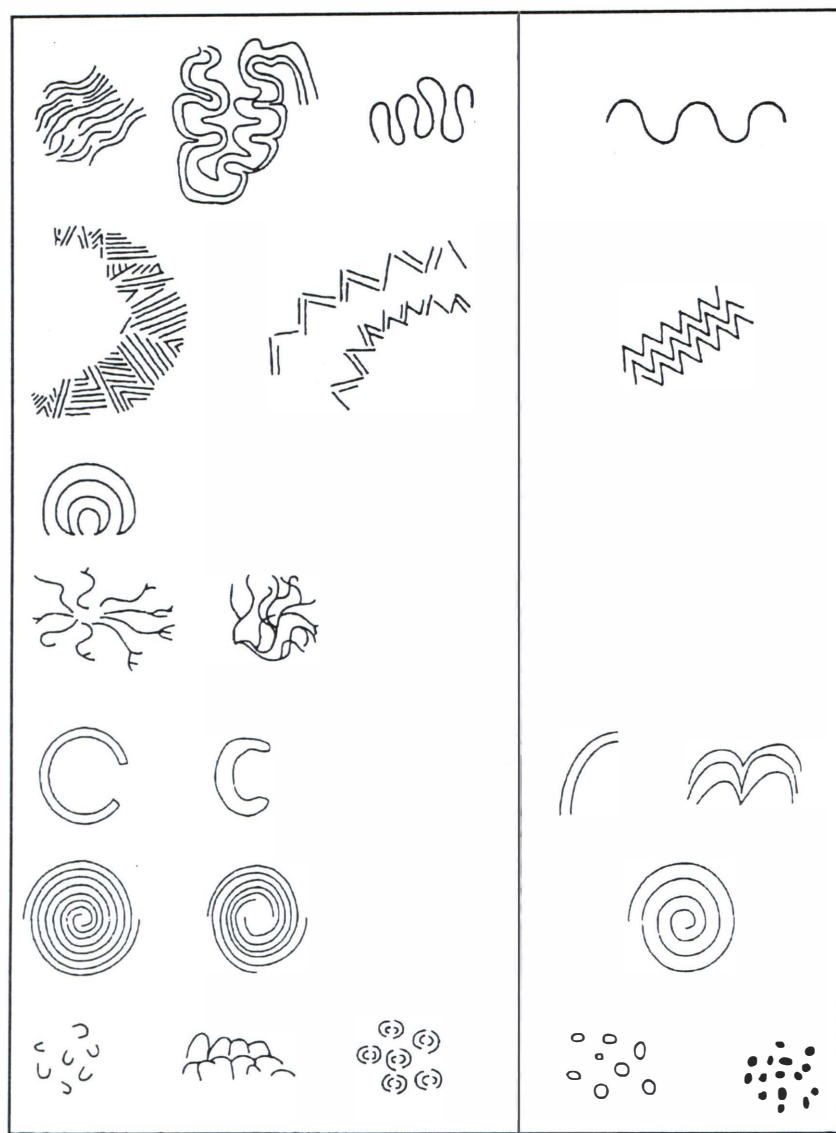


Fig. 1 Motifs characteristic of entoptic imagery (left column) compared with undiagnostic motifs (right column).
(From Bradley 1997 after J. Dronfield)

states of consciousness [ASC]. One might be forgiven for thinking that rock art research is now all-but synonymous with ASC.

While there is much rock art that has little or no apparent involvement with ASC, the current interest in trance images means that any review of rock art research requires a good deal of discussion of this topic. The key being used to unlock 'trance imagery' in rock art is quite specific. Certain geometrical patterns are known to arise spontaneously in the 'mind's eye' when entering trance (see fig. 1). It is considered that these visual

responses are 'hard wired' into the human neurophysiology, which means that all human beings will see similar images when entering trance. It is not fully proven that this is true for all living human races - although seems to hold up so far - and impossible to prove for people living many generations ago. The proponents of this key, such as David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson, are trying to construct a neuropsychological model explaining the way in which people in ASC experience certain visual hallucinations [2]. These images are often termed entoptic ('inner eye') phenomena, but the term



Fig.2 Zimbabwe rock art showing nasal bleeding. (After Garlake 1995).

'endogenous visual phenomena' is also used, which specifically refers to imagery determined by neural structures rather than hallucinatory images derived from visual memory.

Lewis-Williams and Dowson have been challenged by a number of writers [3] but the criticisms were generally tangential or irrelevant and the 'entoptic' approach emerged from these debates strengthened rather than scathed. The concept of shared neuropsychological reactions to ASC now appeals strongly to nearly all those involved in rock art research.

There is secondary evidence for trance states, as people undergoing such experiences may suffer from nasal bleeding - and southern African rock art includes many figures clearly depicted with lines flowing from each nostril. More dubiously, such nasal bleeding has also been claimed for a Palaeolithic cave painting in the Pyrennees - traditionally interpreted as a person playing a musical bow.

Trance can be induced by ingesting psychoactive plants, chanting and drumming, sensory deprivation or pain. All these 'trance triggers' can be augmented by rapid visual flickering, such as flames. We should also consider that manganese oxides are widely used widely for Palaeolithic

cave art and in some cases were blown on to the cave wall through bone tubes. We know from medical research that artists in close contact with manganese oxides get manganese poisoning - the symptoms of which include visual hallucinations (Dowson 1997).

Lewis-Williams and Dowson originally proposed their theory to help understand Palaeolithic cave art. They later extended their approach to the rock art in British passage graves (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1993) and in this area they have been accompanied by Mark Patton (1990, 1993) and Jeremy Dronfield (1995, 1996). Both Patton and Dronfield develop an idea first proposed by Bradley (1989) that there is an association between megalithic

**It is as if the rock
surface is a veil or
membrane separating
this world from the
supernatural world**

'passages', concentric circular motifs in rock art, and the tunnel or vortex experience often associated with ASC. (Jeremy Harte explores the idea of the tunnel vision in his article in this issue of *At the Edge*.)

Half the world away, Lewis-Williams, Thomas and Deacon (1993) describe how !Kung shamans report entering the earth at sacred sites, travelling through it and emerging elsewhere - a product of the trance vortex experience. The rock art of southern Africa is therefore to be imagined as *emerging* from the rock, not just painted on the surfaces - and there are both ethnographical and medical accounts of ASC causing visions which 'wrap' the surfaces in the visual field. It is as if the rock surface is a veil or membrane separating this world from the supernatural world.

Little people

Ethnohistorical sources regarding the creation of rock art around the world frequently make reference to 'little people' as the makers of rock art. This may be because of taboos against talking about dead shamans, or not distinguishing the dead shaman clearly from the shaman's spirit helper or tutelary spirit. Kevin L. Callahan's ethnographical research (1995) with the native peoples in the American midwest indicates that Spreading Dogbane (part of the Periwinkle family), Catnip, and Deadly Nightshade were used by the Ojibwa shamans (who made the rock art) as hallucinogens. The medical literature that indicates people who take atropine hallucinogens (such as Deadly Nightshade) and people in the second stage of alcohol withdrawal during delirium tremens (i.e. they have stopped drinking two to three days earlier) often see 'little people' for about thirty minutes. Callahan suggests that the effects of atropine and alcohol may account for the numerous reports from around the world of 'little people' creating rock art. (For further research on 'little people' see Janet Bord's new book, *Fairies*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.)

As previously noted, there are plenty of examples of rock art from cultures which, at least in modern times, are not known to use ritual trances. Robert Layton's comprehensive study of Australian rock art (1992) makes no suggestion that trance-induced visions have inspired any Australian rock art - and this is despite the widespread significance of dream-related images and the pervasive mythology of the 'Dreamtime' among the native peoples of that continent.

Nevertheless, one is left agreeing with William James (1902) 'Our normal waking consciousness . . . is but one special type of consciousness,



Fig. 3: 'Sorcerer' from Les Trois-Frères. This line drawing by Abbe Breuil ignores a dense 'palimpsest' of lines and motifs. The original is approx. 750 mm long.

whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness, entirely different . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.'

Muddled shamans

This is not to say that all is rosy in the interpretation of rock art. The 'trance vision' approach may provide an excellent basis for further research, but considerable care is needed when trying to generalise. One of the main issues is that the trance-induced visions drop all too easily into the very muddled waters of modern concepts of 'shamanism'.

This problem is abundantly clear with the many amateur rock art researchers who have jumped aboard the 'trance vision' bandwagon. As one observer said: 'It's as if the popular thinking is . . . "Well, we can't figure it out so it must be shamanistic!"' (Keele 1996). The problem is further

compounded by the ill-defined use of the term 'shamanism'. Properly, it applies to specific magical practices among the peoples of the Uralic (Finno-Ugrian) and Altaic language families in Europe and Asia (Hutton 1993) - it has been called a 'circumpolar cult' for good reason. The linguistic links between these languages suggest inter-group contacts going back to at least 2,000 BC - and there is some evidence for shamanic practices among all the descendants of these language groups, suggesting that a proto-shamanism of some kind existed back in the third millennium BC. In these societies the shamans have strictly defined roles, with the central feature being the ability to undergo 'out of body' travel to the Otherworlds - often in the guise of an animal.

Unfortunately, since the 1960s the words 'shamanism' and 'shaman' have been used by a growing number of anthropologists to embrace a much wider selection of traditional magical techniques and their practitioners.

Archaeologists who have pointed to 'shamanism' in European Palaeolithic cave art have only added to this confusion. There is no evidence for shamanism in Palaeolithic cave art. Some of the imagery has been *interpreted* as shamanic for one reason only [4] - the 'sorcerers' supposedly depicted in the cave of Les Trois-Frères, and others at Altamira, Los Casares and the Grotta des Espéluques have long been interpreted as humans wearing animal costume or caught in the act of metamorphosing into animal shape, on the shaky ground that the costumes and shape-shifting are like those encountered in historical accounts of shamanism.

In reality, we have no idea of what kind of costume a Palaeolithic shaman would wear, or indeed if there were shamans in those days. As my article 'Making time' in the last issue of *At the Edge* proposed,

it is blatant cultural chauvinism to assume that 'traditional' societies barely changed over time. This is a critical issue, as nearly everything we know about shamanism comes from the last three or four centuries of historical records. We cannot discount the possibility of what is now termed shamanism being a factor in Palaeolithic religion - but it is foolish in the extreme to regard the shape-shifters on the cave walls as proven shamans without allowing any other possibilities. They are just as likely to represent gods, totemic ancestors, or even representations of important individuals, with their distinctive qualities expressed by substituting animal parts for human ones [5].

The validity of the term 'shamanism' is questionable even in the work of Lewis-Williams and Dowson, the prominent pioneers of the idea of trance visions in rock art. They based their research on the San people of southern 'bushmen' of southern Africa, and described their religious practices as shamanic. However, a recent re-examination of San mythology in relation to rock paintings (Solomon 1997) strongly suggests that 'figures with both animal and human features are not trancers or shamans, as the dominant model suggests. Rather, these and other images are better understood in relation to San myths, and to beliefs about the spirits of the dead.' Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that the San peoples only adopted 'shamanic' religious practices *after* early contacts with European colonialists, whereas the creation of rock art began long before the colonial era.

As a 'litmus test' for interdisciplinary awareness (or the lack of), a large number of archaeological papers and books on 'shamanic' rock art cite Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism - archaic techniques of ecstasy* (1964) - yet rarely if ever mention the many reservations which ethnologists now have

about his pioneering study. When it comes to interdisciplinary awareness, I strongly suspect many readers of *At the Edge* leave far too many academics deep in the shade.

Deep immersion needed

In southern Africa, and in the Americas, societies known to use trance states were producing rock art until comparatively recent times, and ethnographical evidence can help understand the imagery of the rock art. However, what emerges is that the whole subject is complex and, if anyone is serious about understanding the messages left on the rocks then they must immerse themselves deeply in the ethnographical study of the culture, the religion, the customs, and the sign language of the native peoples.

In north America, at least, these native peoples themselves regard the 'rock art' as *rock writings*. To them it is and always has been a form of communication. What rock art researchers call 'style', they call 'subject matter'. By understanding the way they expressed themselves, not to mention the manner in which various sign language techniques were used, a different message from the one popular among researchers may emerge (Keele 1996). (For other examples of rock writings see Valtars Grivins' discussion of Latvian examples in this issue of *At the Edge*.)

As Dobres (1996) asks, 'If [entoptic patterns] are largely hard-wired in the brain and are therefore common cross-culturally (which is supposed to explain why a generally small number of forms crop up in rock art around the world from the late Pleistocene onward), then they would seem to general enough to be the locus of *multiple* meanings and thus be more (not less) culturally specific than thus far considered

(as they appear to be *interpretations* and not faithful depictions of some brute reality). That such images might be polysemic would, it seems to me, require that we get far more specific about physical contexts in which the art is found and the original sociotechnical contexts in which it was produced and viewed - and not talk in vague generalities about forms divorced from context.'

Dobres then raises an even more wide-ranging question: 'Is shamanism and its relationship to experiencing altered states of consciousness (the supposed context for seeing these neuro-psychologically-based forms) everywhere and always the same? The cross-cultural ethnographic literature says otherwise.'

The answer, Dobres suggests, is to step back from the earlier over-generalisations and concentrate on the specific contexts in which such imagery has been found, and use the associated archaeological record to propose interpretations of the original social contexts of art production and viewing.

Magnetic hotspots

As if this was not complex enough, other researchers are finding entirely different ways of approaching the rock art records. Although acting quite independently, a number of American researchers have reported magnetic 'anomalies' at rock art sites.

Chris Gralapp (1995) provides a good example: 'Our rock art group approached a large granitic rock which was covered on two sides with petroglyphs. The glyphs consist of several groups of concentric circles, two groups of which are connected by a deeply incised line. The line itself makes several right angled turns across the surface of the rock. I was interested in discovering which direction the panel was facing, so I retrieved my compass to take a bearing. As I approached the rock face, I established

magnetic north. Then, as I got close to the glyph surface, the needle began to spin around, until it pointed directly to the center of one of the concentric circles, right into the bullseye. I moved the compass over to the other concentric group, and the same thing happened.

'As I moved the compass across the sets of concentric circles (each set consisted of five concentric rings, the outermost of which measured about 8 or 9 inches) the needle went for the dead center of the target. In other words, if the compass passed across only 8 or 9 inches of surface, the needle always oriented to the centermost point.

'To eliminate the possibility that my compass was faulty, another person brought out his compass to compare. The performance was repeated. We also were able to capture the phenomenon on video tape.

'I know it's true that rocks with ferrous components can be magnetized in various ways - we were speculating that a lightning strike could cause this kind of polar switching. It begs the question, though, of how did the makers of the glyphs know where to center their 'bulls eyes'? It seemed way more than a coincidence to me. As a control, we examined other surrounding rocks using the compass test, and had negative results, all except for the only other rock featuring a concentric circle glyph. In this case the needle switched directions not at the bullseye, but above it. The switching happened only over surfaces bearing petroglyphs.'

Responses to Gralapp included reports of similar examples in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Other researchers noted that north American rock art (from as far apart as Oregon, Manitoba and Arizona) was often associated with lightning strikes - known to cause localised melting and magnetisation of iron-rich rocks. As Bruce Rogers (1995) put it: 'my bet is that the Native Americans found a few fused

patches, connected them mentally with lightning strikes from the gods up there in the sky, and used them for power loci for rock art.' Well, it's as a better idea than many put forward in rock art studies!

Solar observatories

A whole different bunch of American rock art researchers have been investigating the way some rock art motifs act as markers for solar events - indeed, it seems to be the 'upcoming bandwagon' among American rock art researchers. So, rock art has been found at places where the sunrise would have been seen, say, in a horizon notch on a specific day. Other rock art takes advantage of being partially concealed so direct sunlight only falls on specific motifs on particular days, such as solstices [6]. Many examples of both phenomena been found in western USA - although there are examples of both phenomena closely associated with Irish rock art too.

Acoustic anomalies

Yet a different approach has extended beyond the visual senses and begun to regard the rock art as just part of a richer kinaesthetic experience. Over the last ten years Steven Waller has investigated over 100 rock art sites in France, Australia and USA for sound reflections, and found unusual echoes at every one of them. 'For example, I've found that echoes of percussion noises such as clapping can mimic the sound of hoof beats, and hooved animals are a frequent rock art theme. Voices appear to emanate from rock surfaces where beings are depicted, as if the images are speaking.' (Waller 1997) He recently completed an analysis of acoustic data collected throughout Horseshoe Canyon, and found that the five rock art sites are also the five locations within the canyon possessing the greatest intensity of echoing.

Direct ethnographic evidence

for acoustics as a motivation factor for the production of rock art has recently been found in India. Echoes have religious significance to members of an indigenous tribe called the Korku. This tribe continues to produce rock art today, using echoes as a selection criteria when choosing which caves to paint (Waller 1997, citing personal communication from Somnath Chakraverty).

Vibes in the tombs

Although only some European megalithic tombs contain rock art, they would all have originally created interesting 'acoustic environments' with enhanced sounds and echoes. Passage tombs are perfectly suited to generate an acoustic phenomenon called Helmholtz Resonance - the hollow type of sound created by blowing a stream of air across the top of a bottle - and the low frequencies needed to set a passage tomb resonating could best have been initiated by performing rhythmical drumming in the chamber, with the speed relating to the size of the tomb (Watson 1997). According to Watson, Canster Round in Caithness can be set resonating with a beat of four per second; the larger tomb at Maes Howe on the Orkneys resonates at two beats per second.

The risky future

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed summary of all the rock art research world-wide. Much of the activity is still related to finding and documenting sites. The WWW and the rock-art e-mail list are proving to provide an excellent forum for the exchange of information and ideas (Graeme Chappell's article in this issue provides more details). This summer information has been posted to the Internet on rock art in Turkey, Colombia and India, as well as the usual 'hot spots' such as America and Spain.

However, this seemingly healthy activity may prove to be a short-lived phenomenon. One of the leading American rock art researchers, David Whitley, was asked to prepare a report on the status of US rock art research for ICOMOS International Rock Art Committee. His report (Whitley 1996b) draws four conclusions about the situation in North America:

- Rock art research has experienced a revolution in the last decade, with a variety of new techniques and methods, and an increased professional interest in studying and conserving/managing sites;

- This revolution has been paralleled by a dramatic increase in public interest in sites;

- Yet this research revolution has occurred largely in spite of rather than through the support of the US academic community;

- Given the inherent fragility of the sites along with increased visitation pressure, we have reached a point in which we will soon lose our rock art record, just as we have learned how to study and interpret it.'

As Whitley comments (1996a): 'the indifference (and sometimes hostility) maintained towards rock art by most academic archaeologists' has its roots in the 'complex intellectual history of Americanist research. . . yet nowhere in the implicit contract with American tax-payers who pay their salaries has American academia been given the dispensation allowing it to ignore aspects of the archaeological record.' To add insult to injury, at the few rock art sites which are being given official recognition, the amateur rock art researchers whose hard work led to the sites' discovery in the first place are now being denied permits to continue to research the sites! (Morse-Kahn 1996).

If the situation in America is far from ideal, consider the situation in other countries rich in rock art but anything but rich in resources to study and conserve their heritage - such as

Morocco, Chad, Ethiopia, Algeria, Botswana, Eritrea, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia. It is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of rock art images in Africa - and only about ten percent are currently known, and of these only a small fraction have been photographed.

In less than 50 years a large part of this evidence will have disappeared forever

Unlike the cave art of the Pyrennees, most rock art is unprotected from visitors or even natural processes of erosion such as sunlight, rain, termites and wasp nests. Painted rock art is the most vulnerable, as the pigments flake or fade. Both painted and carved rock art are only as durable as the rock surface on which they were made - and many rocks are friable and readily erode. Some rock art is carved onto more-or-less horizontal surfaces and is simply walked over by visitors, causing it to wear away quickly - thereby aggravating the problem because visitors may simply not see that they are walking on an all-but worn away masterpiece. But, for the archaeologists, the context of the rock art is the most informative - and often most vulnerable - resource. Insignificant rock shelters may contain invaluable information in the thin layers of soil on the ground, and the surrounding land may contain faint traces of associated settlement sites.

The impact of even a small number of guided visitors soon has serious deleterious effects on the surrounding ground. In practice, most rock art sites have no guides, so visitors - good intentioned and otherwise - churn up the ground when they turn up in off-road vehicles, light fires (all too often in the shelters and close to the rock art, causing the rock surface to spall

away) and deposit modern litter profusely. The temptation to chip off a 'small souvenir' quickly creates extensive cumulative damage, as does the temptation to add graffiti ('It's like painting a penis on the *Mona Lisa*', said one rock art custodian) or - as one movie crew did - colour in the carvings with paint. Worse still, the ready availability of portable power tools means that large chunks of rock surface are being removed for sale to 'collectors'. And African rock art sites are prone to a type of vandalism less common in Europe - being used as target practice by roving guerrillas.

Providing legal protection for rock art sites makes no difference as 'protected' sites fare little better - it is impossible to monitor or police even moderate numbers of remote and scattered sites. Fencing and discrete sign posting may help, but often the best defence is to minimise publicity about new rock art sites - although in the era of off-road vehicles it is almost inevitable that valuable rock art locations will be 'discovered' by people with little or no appreciation of their value or fragility. For instance, Whitley reports that visits to North American rock art sites by 'non-archaeologist' visitors has increased dramatically in the last four years. Indeed, the only rock art sites he has visited in the last few years without encountering other visitors were on land at Fort Irwin, where the U.S. Armored Cavalry keeps the public at bay.

The threats to rock art do not end with 'admirers'. Development is endemic in most countries - housing estates, highways and shopping malls in the Americas now decorate many places where rock art is known to have existed. In the Third World planning processes are even less sensitive to archaeological resources with the result that dams, industrial complexes, road schemes, suburbs and shanty towns are

all swallowing up rock art.

The leading French researcher on cave paintings and rock art, Jean Clottes states bluntly 'It is certain that a major part of the world's rock art will be destroyed in the course of the next decades. In less than 50 years, if things continue at their current pace, a large part of this evidence will have disappeared forever.' (Jaroff 1997).

As a footnote to this dismal scenario, it is just feasible that rock art may turn the tables on the developers from time to time. According to the *Darlington Northern Echo* of 8th August this year, cup and ring marked rocks have been discovered on the site of a proposed wind farm near Barningham, Teesdale - and English Nature are considering applying to have the site scheduled as an ancient monument.

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This article has benefited from the help of a number of key researchers. Special thanks to Kevin L. Callahan, Ann Solomon and Alby Stone for making available unpublished articles. Grateful thanks also to Stan Beckensall, Graeme Chappell, Marcia-Anne Dobres, Chris Gralapp, Stephen Keele, Steven Waller and David Whitley for providing valuable information. Several of these people also provided helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article although, needless to say, they do not necessarily share the opinions expressed here.

As the references to this article make clear, the rock-art and other e-mail lists provide a primary forum for the exchange of news and ideas relating to rock art research - more so than for any other archaeological sub-discipline. The preparation of this article has been influenced by numerous uncredited contributors to these e-mail lists, and my thanks to all.

Notes:

1: Pedantically, the first published suggestions that there was ethnographical evidence for the associations between 'trance vision' and rock art was a study of Pecos River style art in Texas by Bill Newcomb way back in 1967. (Forrest Kirkland and W.W. Newcomb jnr, *The Rock Art of Texas Indians*, University of Texas Press, 1967). However, only with the publication of Lewis-Williams' paper in 1981 did this suggestion receive widespread attention. David Whitley (1996c) provided this summary of the early evolution of the 'trance vision' approach:

'For the record, here is a thumbnail sketch of this "bandwagon" which a number of us have been so "quick" to climb aboard:

- In 1949 Carl Jung first suggested that art may have originated in subjective light images in the eyes;
- In 1972 Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff first noted the formal correspondence between entoptic forms and Tukano art;
- In 1974 Eichmeier and Hofer suggested a connection between European Palaeolithic rock art and entoptics;

- In 1977 Tom Blackburn was the first to draw the parallel specifically with North American rock art, in this case Chumash, which itself built on scholarship going back to Alfred Kroeber in 1925 (actually written in 1914), linking California rock art with shamans and their altered states of consciousness;

- Ken Hedges was the next American scholar to argue in favor of the hypothesis, in a series of papers written in 1982 and 1983, which he has continued to support in subsequent papers;

- David Lewis-Williams' & Thomas Dowson's "Signs of all times" did not appear until 1988, well-over a decade after Eichmeier and Hofer first introduced the concept to rock art research.

- As for myself, I completed my PhD on California rock art in 1982. It makes no mention of entoptics even though I had seen Blackburn's papers and a pre-print copy of Hedges', because at that time I wasn't yet convinced they were right. In fact, it wasn't until after 1987, after I had completed my first detailed review of South-Central California ethnohistory, that I became convinced: partly because the case for a shamanic origin for the art was compelling and unequivocal; partly because I found that Frank Latta had independently drawn the same connection between entoptics and geometric images (though he knew nothing about the neuropsychological literature) and had discussed and confirmed this with his Yokuts informants; and partly because Lewis-Williams' and Dowson's N-P model was the first usable analytical model which got beyond the simple equation of geometric = entoptic.'

2: The literature on ASC and rock art is vast. For a concise summary with comprehensive bibliography, see Turpin (1994: 73-5). The major work is still Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988). See also Trubshaw (1992) for an overview of ASC although without discussion of rock art.

3: It would require a substantial article to summarise these debates. Hedges (1994:117-120) provides a good summary, although excludes Bednarik's challenge (1990) which is accompanied by counter-objections from Lewis-Williams and Dowson.

4: I do not accept that 'entoptic patterns' in cave art are direct evidence for shamanic practices, as outlined previously.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing this article I have not seen a new book which specifically argues for a shamanic interpretation of the European Paleolithic cave art: J. Clottes and J.D. Lewis-Williams, *Les Chamanes de la Préhistoire: Transe et magie dans les grottes ornées*, Seuil, 1996.

5: My remarks on shamanism in Uralic and Altaic language families, through to the reservations about the interpretations of Palaeolithic 'sorcerers' draw heavily on an unpublished work by Alby Stone; my grateful thanks to him for sharing these ideas.

6: Examples of rock art solar markers can be found at the SOLMAR Project WWW site: <http://www.azstarnet.com/~solmar/>

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N.B. There are a number of references to postings to the rock-art e-mail list. These messages are archived, but access is rather cumbersome. For a list of the available archive files sending the command "INDEX ROCK-ART" to

LISTSERV@ASUVM.INRE.ASU.EDU. You can then order these files with a "GET ROCK-ART LOGxxxx" command, or using LISERV's database search facilities. Send an "INFO DATABASE" command for more information on the latter.

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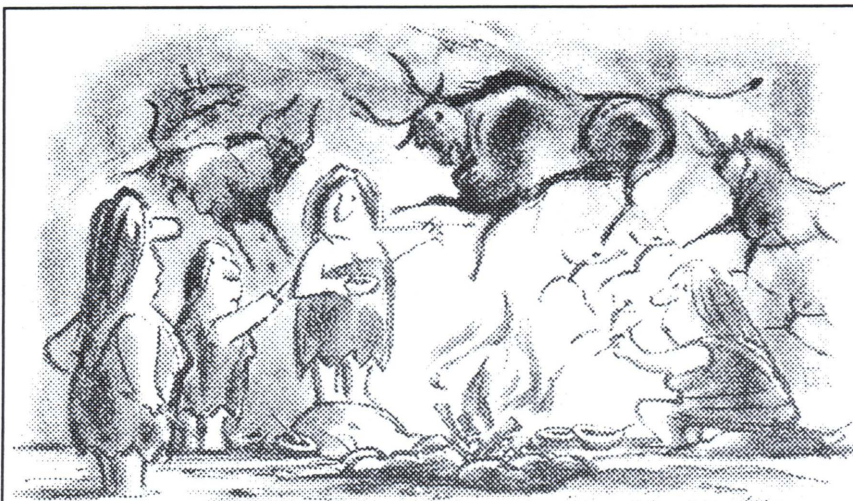
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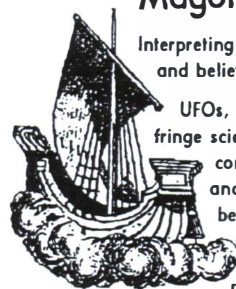
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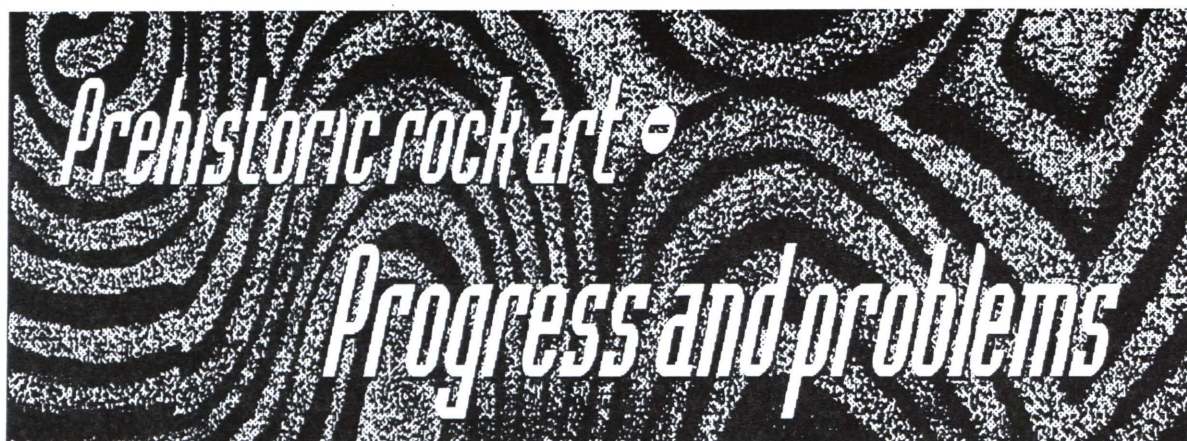
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I look back with some embarrassment at my early work, when I had arrived at some tentative conclusions about the origin, meaning, chronology and use of prehistoric rock art. However, the study of the subject was then in its infancy, and the arrival of more researchers and the acceptance of disciplined rock art studies as an integral part of archaeology has made that work a useful part of the archives. This article is a summary of my thinking at the moment.

There are two major contexts for prehistoric rock art - within the landscape, and on or in monuments.

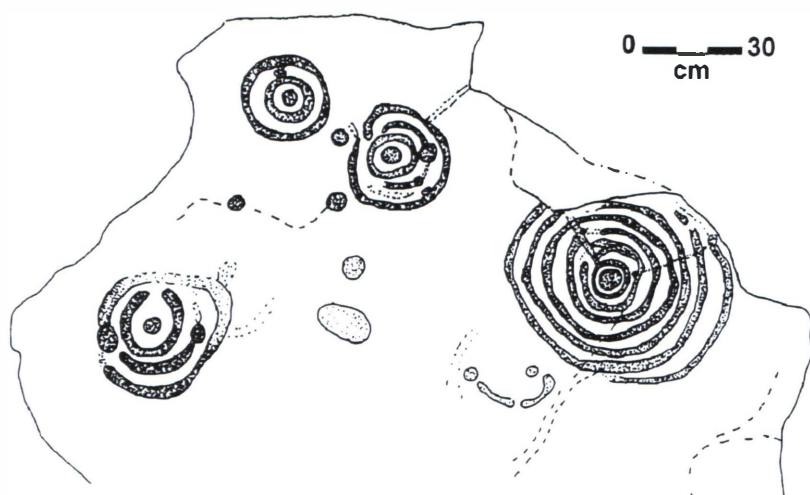
STAN BECKENSALL has spent over 30 years of his spare time recording every panel of rock art in northern England from the Scottish Border to Wensleydale. All of it has been, or will be, published in seven books and many articles. A Fellow of the Societies of Antiquaries of Scotland and London, and a member of ICOMOS-CAR, and director of excavations, his work has been additional to his being a trainer of teachers, head teacher, dramatist and poet.

Motifs within the landscape

Recent research has established that Rock Art appears within the landscape in marginal areas which would have been of more vital use to pastoralists and hunters than to agriculturalists. It is almost always on sedimentary rocks, either outcrop or earthfast. Most is situated at viewpoints overlooking fertile valleys. Although it can be at the highest point in the locality, it does not have to be so in order to command wide views.

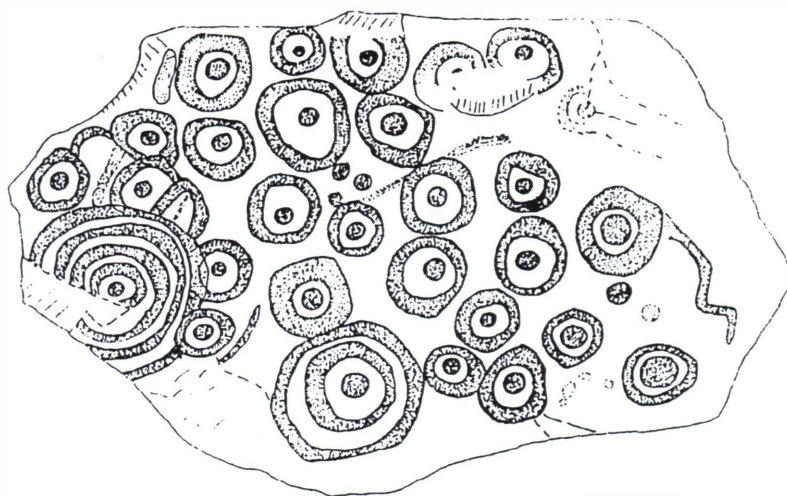
Few of the marked rocks can be seen from a distance, and people must have known where the rocks were in order to view them. In some cases, such as the Brimham Rocks, Broomridge and Dod Law, there are prominent natural landscape features such as cliffs or dramatically-eroded outcrops that create an unusual focal point. Even so, most motifs are on near-horizontal surfaces and would soon become obscured by vegetation. Many marked surfaces are less than a metre in size. The motifs make use of the shape of and irregularities in the rocks, so that motifs and rocks blend into the landscape of the high moorland sympathetically.

Many of the concentrations of such rocks lie in the same areas that earlier Mesolithic groups favoured for temporary camps, but flint and chert artifacts found there cover a wide time range, including



Recently-discovered rock art at Broomridge Site 2 with complex motifs carbed on outcrop rocks situated on a ridge with very wide views. The ridge leads to the major rock art site at Roughting Linn.

All illustrations by Stan Beckensall.



Upper and lower surfaces of the carved stone from the cist at Fulforth Farm

leaf-shaped and barb and tang arrow points. Evidence for this is particularly clear in County Durham and Richmondshire. Such areas, with thin acidic soils are in some cases marked by low-walled enclosures of uncertain date, associated with stock. Dating in such areas has so far been impossible, and there are no firm associations.

The motifs must have been a message from and to someone. As some are found in a 'ritual' context, it is possible that a message could mean different things to different people, such as visitors, neighbors, or people with special 'spiritual' gifts. In the Kilmartin valley of Argyll and on Tayside, the most complex motifs are higher up the valley slopes than the simple cup marks, but each region has to be looked at individually, and there is no universal rule.

The motifs themselves have

regional characteristics, but given the simplicity of the symbols used, it is not surprising that some makers may have hit upon the same idea, although there is nothing to equal the round cornered rectangles of Northumberland, the multiple concentric circles of Greenland and Achnabreck (Argyll) and Galloway. Rosettes occur in Onnaig (Argyll), Northumberland and Gayles Moor (Yorks) for example. Few areas have the 2 or 3-radial grooves of the area near Wooler (Northumb.). This is not an analysis of where different motifs are: it is to make a general point that there are regional variations and there are parallels to be seen on some panels of rock art throughout Britain. The language is similar - some may have been more articulate than others.

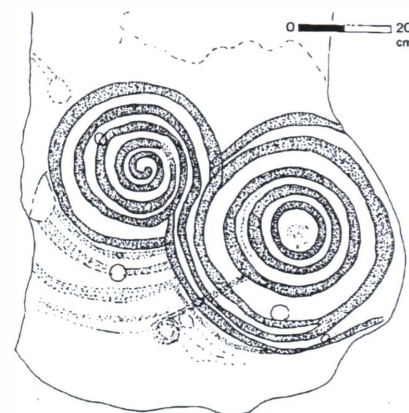
Motifs in or on monuments

Motifs occur on and in monuments. This is true of standing stones, such as Long Meg, or the Crinan Valley stones. Spirals occur as a rare but connected art form at places such as Castlerigg, in the Irish passage graves, and in the Scottish isles. It is difficult or impossible to date most of these, as they can be placed on monuments before or after a stone has been erected.

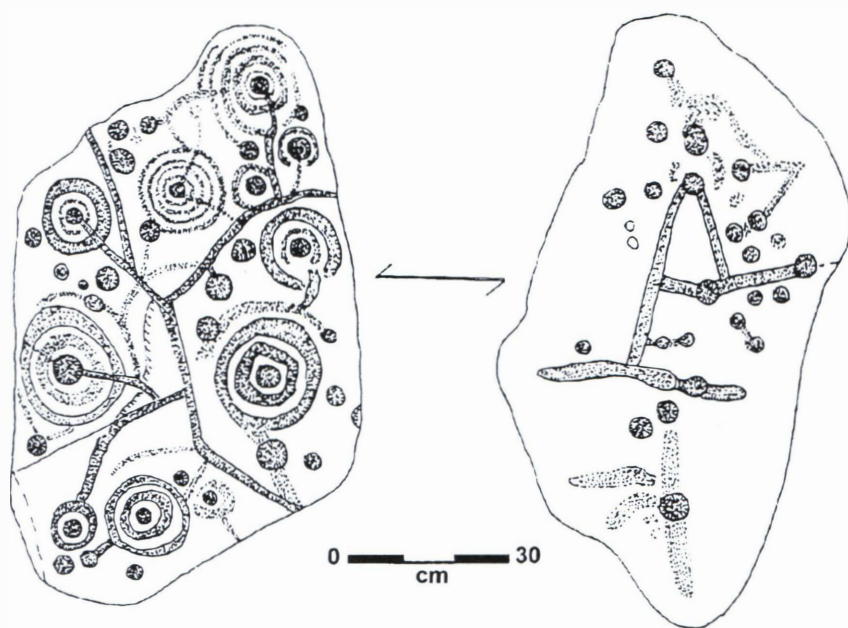
It is in burials that we see the most exciting possibilities of trying to understand the use of these symbols, but at the same time it is a chronological nightmare! The Calva cairns and Irish passage graves illustrate the importance of the symbols as part of the ritual of burial, of the veneration of ancestors, and of the continuity of the tribe. In Ireland the art form is exuberant, with huge slabs knocked into shape, decorated profusely and with ingenuity, and being incorporated into spectacular monuments that dominate the landscape. It is unlike the modest insertion of art in the landscape that we normally see; it is dominant and assertive.

In Clava, it is much more modest.

The dead, too, are incorporated in the monuments communally - a neolithic



Spiral rock art on Little Meg, Cumbria.



Upper and lower surfaces of the carved stone from the cist at Gainford.

tradition that eventually gives way to single burials within a mound.

It is when we look at rock art in smaller round cairns that more problems of dating and function arise. It has been noted that some rock art in early bronze age graves shows signs of having been exposed to weathering or of being broken rather like re-used building material to fit a cist. It has also been noted that rock art faces inwards or downwards into the grave. People's recording of this in the past has been sketchy and it is possible that some slabs attributed to graves may not have come from them. The Fulforth Farm site has made it very clear that in this one case the whole process of incorporating art into the grave was carefully thought-out and deliberate.

Fulforth Farm overlooks the village of Witton Gilbert, near Durham city, and in 1995 a large decorated slab was dragged out of the field during ploughing. It was noted that there had been a scatter of small cobbles in that area of the field. In 1997 the site was excavated by Fiona Baker and James Wright, under the auspices of Durham University

Department of Archaeology and the County Archaeologist. I worked with them. The cist pit covered by the large slab was very unusual, in that it was divided into two, roughly east and west. The north half formed a rectangular box, lined with stones that supported the cover. Inside a vertically-placed slab with its decorated side facing outwards had a pattern of cups, rings and parallel zig-zags or serpentine grooves reminiscent of Irish Passage Grave art. All the pick marks were visible, including the tentative beginnings of another design, and the slab had not been taken from outcrop. Another stone was a small boulder with fresh pick marks on two faces, tamped down into the pit, then pressed so hard into the gravel below that it left an impression of its linked deep cups. Inside this 'box' two rough flint blades were deposited and a piece of charcoal.

The south half of the pit was a rectangle of small rounded cobbles, among which were cremations, and in the south-west corner of this arrangement a polished stone axe had been set on end, its edge facing upwards. The cap stone then sealed only the

northern half and was thus later than everything underneath it. All the finds point to a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date, of perhaps 4,000 years ago.

This is the first cist with marked incorporated stones to have been excavated using modern archaeological techniques, and the results of laboratory tests may establish the dates of the deposits. What is clear is that this slab was not re-used outcrop rock, but was quarried to fit the pit, and was prepared by pecking all over its under-surface. The rock was then covered with cups and single rings, and in one place a four-ringed motif around a cup was added, but this figure both cut through others and was cut through, showing a change in plan. Double concentric circles around a cup have been squeezed in between single-ringed figures. A zig-zag motif and ringless cups provide other anomalies in the general design.

This extensively-designed slab was placed downwards and is today as fresh as the day it was made, sealing in the deposits. When it was dragged out in 1995, parts of it were broken off, but most fragments have been recovered and planned on to the drawing. The top side which was vulnerable to plough-scarring, was covered with plain cups, two sets of which are joined by a short groove.

Although disturbed, the Ouston cairn stone (Northumb.) is similarly purpose-made and absolutely fresh.

Rock art is not confined to cists, though. Just as the Irish passage grave mounds incorporated art in the structure of the mound and in the use of decorated kerbs, so a few smaller cairns of a later period adopt the same principle. Some include many purposely-decorated cobbles, uneroded in the cairn material and in the kerbs. Good examples of this are at Fowbeny, Weetwood and the Pitland Hill mounds in Northumberland, and in the Hinderwell Beacon mound in Yorkshire. These represent only

a very small minority of cairns in Britain and the practice is rare. Even allowing for such stones being overlooked in past explorations, the placing of decorated cobbles in cairns or the incorporation of rock art in cists is the exception rather than the rule. We do not know why such mounds were chosen for this practice. What must not be overlooked is that there are many finds of 'loose', uneroded decorated cobbles that may have come from disturbed mounds. Those at How Taflon (Co. Durham) find their way into a wall, for example, actually built on the mound after excavation but there are many others that may have survived the destruction of mounds and the dispersal of their material.

In Cumbria, almost all the decorated stones are in a monumental rather than landscape context, whereas in Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire it is the other way round. The spirals on Castlerigg stone circle, the variety of motifs on Long Meg, the chevrons and inverted U-shapes on Glassonby stone circle are very rare motifs used in a special context.

Whether they be slabs, boulders or cobbles, those that are decorated on more than one face are particularly important, even when they are out of context, for their origin may not be uprooted outcrop. Stones from How Taflon and Dalton and the Gainford slab in the Barnard Castle area are examples out of context, and the Fulforth Farm slabs are firmly in context.

We do not know how long the tradition of marking stones continued, or precisely when it began. We have now a datable beginning and a possible end date from the Dalladies barrow and the Fulforth Farm cist, which suggest a use for over a thousand years. No doubt we shall get more information either from sites accidentally discovered or from a programme of excavation. At least everyone is now aware of the questions to which we require answers.

The last thirty years has seen a great increase in the number

of recorded marked rocks in Britain, ranging from small stones with single cups to the marvellous discoveries recently made at Dowth in Ireland. We have more data to think about, and with.

Not many years ago most, if not all, of northern England's prehistoric rock art was generally assumed to be Bronze Age in origin. Recent accounts have sought to impose an entirely Neolithic context for all open air rock art, but have allowed for the reuse of already ancient marked surfaces in early Bronze Age funerary contexts. Paul Frodsham and myself (forthcoming) have considered in detail a number of sites at which rock art has been discovered in possible Bronze Age contexts in northern England, and our main conclusion is that there is currently no clear evidence for the production of rock art in the Bronze Age of northern England, with the possible exception of Fulforth Farm. There are a few sites at which reuse may be reasonably suggested. In addition there is a large number of early bronze age cairns in areas immediately adjacent to exposed rock art outcrops which continue to respect special places but not necessarily understand or appreciate the old rock art.

Symbolism

About 5,000 years ago, people had already cleared areas for the growth of crops, herded some animals, and hunted others. The success of their growing crops depended on the fertility and depth of the soil, the climate at the time, the height above sea level, and their experience in coping with these factors and using the land to its best advantage. People who were farmers, hunters and herdsman were fully aware of how they depended on the land, and they observed the movement of sun, moon and stars and the cycles of procreation and birth in the animals and crops that kept

them alive with a sharpness that we may have lost. We think of them being 'close to nature'.

We can only imagine how different life was for them and we look for things that we might still have in common. Our material lives could not be more different, yet we imagine that they experienced joy, frustration, a deep sense of loss when someone they liked died, love, hate, pain and relief. We also know that they spent a disproportionate amount of time building what might be called by a materialist 'useless' buildings, structures that had no practical value in producing food or other wealth. We see ditched enclosures, and standing stones, long and round cairns - all expressing a need to be in touch with ancestors, or with each other in a re-affirmation of their tribal identity, and of the need to have a special place to which they could turn. We have a 'cool web of language' that we hope will keep away some of the awful (and awe-ful) thoughts that beset us. Some reach out for horoscopes today, swing needles on cotton above pregnant women to predict the sex of the child, have faith in the national lottery despite the astronomical odds, welcome a black cat or avoid walking under a ladder. Our superstitions and our inadequacies take many forms. Some things do not change.

If we can imagine, then, people living five thousand or so years ago, moving across the landscape of lightly forested uplands overlooking the richer, more fertile river valleys, knowing from signs and shared memory the best places to fish, to hunt, farm and gather, we may also see them not as an amorphous mass but as a collection of individuals who depended on each other, among whom some were brighter or stronger than others, some had greater insight into others' psychology - you will have your own thoughts about this, but I think that we can agree that not everyone would have been the same.

When something unusual happens to us, we mark the event, not only in our memories. A war produces a mass of memorials, and the symbols are recognisable and pretty standard: a cross, a soldier leaning on his rifle, for example. Although the Christian tradition of this country has declined, the church buildings still attract gatherings to mark the 'rites of passage' - baptisms, weddings and funerals and in crises people may suddenly find the urge to return to some half-forgotten sanctuary. Within that building we expect to find at least one cross, and its symbolism does not need to be explained to us. All religions have their symbols, instantly recognised. At a more worldly level, we are surrounded by logos. The National Parks have their curlew, the National Trust its acorns, Newcastle United are the Magpies, washing machines simplify the operation by giving us symbols, and our clothes have symbolic washing instructions.

There are so many symbols that we just accept them. Some of them are useful because they simplify an operation for us: following pictures can be easier than following words. Others hide a wealth of meaning that can be of great importance, like the cross, that most potent of all symbols in Christian churches.

When we try to tell people about the most important things that happen to us - about pain, about love, about yearning for something missing, for example, we find it almost impossible to express this simply. It is like the reverse: being asked to 'put into your own words' the meaning of a great poem, when we know that the poet had to write it that way because simple language was inadequate to convey the complexity and power of the feeling.

The prehistoric people who chose to express their observations about life, their view of the world, on rock may well also have said it to each other, but because we have no evidence of their language or

writing, we have to try to read through their paintings and other forms of art what was going on in their minds - and that presents a great heap of problems. A painting of a hunted animal, with its grace, power and speed may tell us about what was around at that time, but it can also tell us that the painter admired these qualities in the natural world, and even that he would have liked to have such attributes himself. Some paintings are 'naturalistic', but in others there are symbols that can not easily be explained. Why is it that young children early in their development draw people with extended arms and legs? Why do they go through the same stage of selecting some attributes of human beings and rejecting others? We can go in to our friends' houses where such art is displayed on the kitchen wall and remember that we have seen it many times before. Their art has selected the most important things that they see around them.

The best works of art are not those that merely reproduce a kind of photograph of what is seen.

Rock art world-wide takes many different forms, but we know that over seventy percent of it was produced by hunters and gatherers. Over 150 major rock art sites have been identified, representing over 40,000 years of history, and a large part of these are in desert and semi-desert, isolated today. We can see lively hunters pursuing their game, people dressed in ritual head-dresses and other 'symbolic' clothes, procreation and fertility well-represented, weapons flying through the air, horses, chariots and ploughs, bees buzzing around a honey gatherer, primitive boats. The time span is so great and its distribution so widespread that this art covers all human activity.

The trouble with symbols, when their origins and meanings are unclear, is that we tend to read into them whatever we like. Your first impressions have

to be questioned: are you reading into ancient symbols something that is not there? Most people see a circle as 'eternity', with no beginning or end, but how do we know that people in the past saw it in that way? There have been over a hundred interpretations of these symbols teased out by Ronald Morris, including musical notation, sacred cow pats, family trees, star charts and maps, and this is a reminder that we should be looking for an explanation that can be supported. The trouble is that we do not know for sure how the symbols originated or what they meant. Perhaps the people who used them did not know how they originated, but with hundreds scattered over the British landscape, it surely could not have been random doodling.

Because we cannot give a definite explanation, this should not stop us from opening up our minds to possibilities, provided we do not say definitely that this is what they are or how they 'worked' in the landscape or on monuments. The act of walking the land to see already-discovered motifs, and the search for new discoveries is an exhilarating experience, for we can enjoy the whole landscape and its mystery. So if artists want to use these symbols in their own work or poets to write about them, why not? After all, art can only be experienced through individuals.

Realising what we know

Despite all uncertainties, there are some things that we do know, such as the rough time-span for their use, a knowledge of how the motifs were pecked onto the rocks, the precise places where they are found. We can record them accurately, and compare types of motifs not only in Britain but with the rest of the world. We also know that as well as those set on earthfast or outcrop rock in the landscape, there are

others in a ritual context with monuments such as burials and standing stones, and that they can be transferred from one site to another.

Preservation

Sadly, some recorded rock art has disappeared. The use of the land for farming or quarrying means that its surface is vulnerable. Cairns are destroyed, and their stones built in to walls, rock is quarried for building and if there is no one aware that there are motifs on it, or do not care, the motifs disappear. Natural agencies such as frost and rain erode the patterns. We tend to think of rock as enduring stuff, but its surface is not, especially as the rock chosen for motifs tends to be soft, such as sandstone. So who is to look after it? Who decides whether a vulnerable surface should be removed from public view by covering it so that it does not erode any more? Is there a compromise to be made in which some sites are kept open as examples in the field? Should replicas be made, and the original site covered with artificial rock, and should replicas be displayed in special centres or museums? Britain is not alone in facing such problems, and in some hot countries where the art is

painted on rock the situation is more critical.

Little or no action has been taken to preserve and display rock art in Britain, and where it has the provision of an iron fence around it to keep off sheep and cattle this may prevent further damage, but destroys the atmosphere.

A day's conference at Durham last year, with Professor Richard Bradley, Professor Bob Layton, Paul Frodsham and me as speakers (see *At the Edge* No.4), produced from the audience a resolution that we needed a British organisation to address the problems of recording and preserving our rock art. Since then English Heritage has approached a number of us who are most active in this field to give our views. There is now some chance that Britain is about to take its rock art seriously, as a vital part of the archaeological record - so watch this space!

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A recent collection of articles by 17 authors, including articles on rock art by Richard Bradley, Paul Frodsham, Stan Beckensall and Clive Waddington is contained in this collection: Frodsham, P., (ed), 1996. *Neolithic Studies in No-Man's Land. Northern Archaeology* Vol.13.

The full report on the Witton Gilbert cist excavation will be a landmark. The Director is Fiona Baker, the Site Supervisor James Wright. The excavation was an official collaboration with Durham County Council whose Archaeologist is Niall Hammond, and with the University of Durham Department of Archaeology (Professor Anthony F. Harding), which will do the post-excavation work on the finds.

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Richard Bradley is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Reading and is highly respected for his original approach to both the social prehistory of Britain and, with *Altering the Earth* [1], to the study of megalith monuments as parts of the landscape. His ability to synthesise the research of other archaeologists into innovative and wide-ranging interpretations is rare. The ability to do so and present the results in a readable style is unique.

Does his latest book, *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe*, live up to this reputation? Yes; indeed, and exceeds expectations. By attempting to integrate rock art studies into wider issues in prehistoric archaeology, Bradley brings new interpretations to both the rock art itself and to the wider issues of prehistory and, as a result, reassesses the fundamentals of approaches to landscape archaeology.

But first we should ask why such a study has not been done before. As I identified in my introductory article to this issue of *At the Edge*, for many decades rock art was entirely marginalised by professional archaeologists. The result was that, while very useful field work was being undertaken, this was entirely by amateurs with little or no contact with academe. Discovery and documentation, although laudable, become almost an end in themselves for these researchers.

In contrast, Bradley regards his approach as treating rock art as 'simply a medium for a wider study of prehistoric society and its occupation of the landscape.' In *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe* he applies a variety of study methods to both the imagery in rock art and to its location in the landscape. Combining these fertile procedures with current thinking on Neolithic and Bronze Age

society enables Bradley to cast light on the wider issues of prehistory.

In the absence of any direct knowledge of the meanings of the images depicted in prehistoric rock art, Bradley favours a 'purely qualitative measure of the amount of information that they had to convey, based on the number and variety of different images on each rock surface.' More importantly, he considers the position of the sites in the wider landscape. This leads to a predictive model about the relationship between the siting of the rock art and the amount of information contained. From this testable model he is able to show that the more complex rock art is associated with sites that have exceptionally good visibility over the surrounding land. Nearby outcrops without rock art have significantly more restricted views of the horizon. Furthermore, rock art sites are often intervisible in ways which readily suggest that this is not the product of chance.

Bradley considers that the study of rock art is quite distinct from the study of prehistoric settlement sites. Neither is it closely related to the study of more prominent prehistoric monuments. Instead, he suggests that rock

An overview of *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe - Signing the Land* by Professor Richard Bradley, Routledge 1997

245 x 175 mm, 238 pages plus 40 b&w photos, paperback £22.50; hardback £65.00

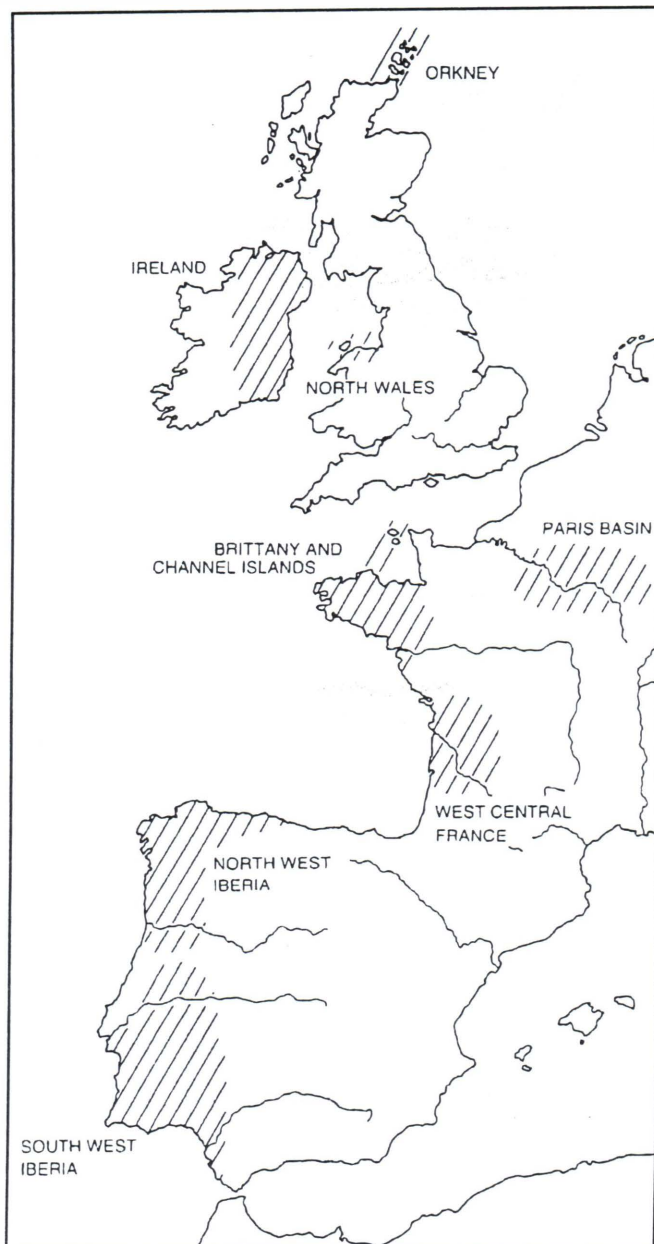
art is part of the 'archaeology of mobility' in that it provides a unique insight into the places, paths and viewpoints associated with hunter-gathering societies.

Ethnology confirms that the world views of hunter gathering people are essentially 'linear' in that landmarks are chosen to mark paths and trails rather than territorial boundaries - a classic example would be the 'song lines' of Australian Aborigines. In contrast, the landmarks and world views of agricultural peoples are associated with enclosed spaces and continuous boundaries.

Rock art tends to disappear by the time of agricultural intensification in the later Bronze Age and Iron Age. Bradley takes this to indicate that the patterns of land tenure associated with the rock art sites lost significance as farming took over.

Generalisations and specifics

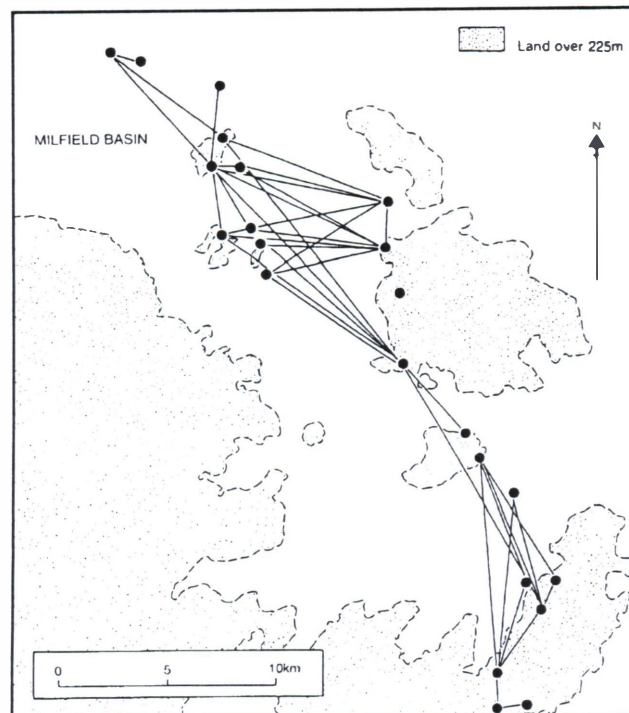
Many aspects of Neolithic culture are remarkably similar throughout northern Spain, western France and the British



Outline distribution of megalithic art.
All illustrations on pages 17 and 18 by
Lyn Sellwood from
Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe

Isles (in a manner that anticipates the medieval pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela). As a result it is no surprise that the rock art of Britain and north-west Spain is striking similar and has been dubbed the 'Atlantic' style.

But the resemblance is not exact. While almost all the motifs found on open air British and Irish rock art have their close counterparts in Galicia, in north-west Spain they are found with other motifs that are not shared along the Atlantic coast - such as animals and weapons. However, just as there are regional variations in the rock art of northern Britain, so Galician rock art is by no means uniform. These detailed differences are discussed by Bradley but they do not counter the

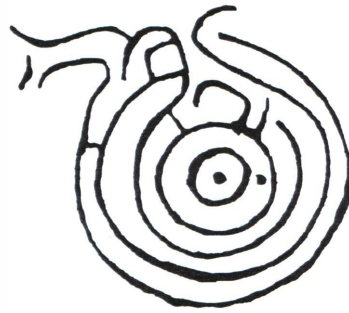
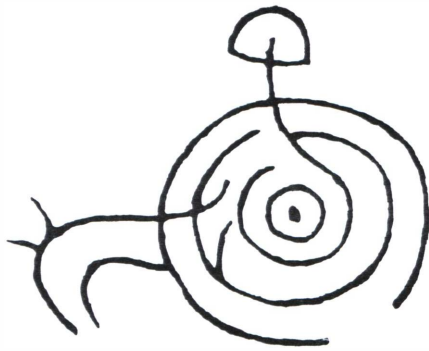


The pattern of intervisibility between groups of rock carvings in north Northumberland (based on fieldwork by Ruth Saunders).

underlying similarity. This means that the rock art must originate no earlier than other aspects of this shared culture. The punch line of Bradley's detailed discussion is that this rock art can be no older than the mid-fourth millennium.

By using a variety of quantitative approaches, Bradley succeeds in showing that British rock art has a special relationship to the land. Petroglyphs are found in areas with fertile soils and tend to overlook the fertile area from somewhat higher ground. More specifically, carvings are most abundant where the richest soil is of limited extent, where expansion would have been limited.

But this is not to suggest that Bradley is proposing that there is one 'simple' explanation. He notes, more or less in passing, that in western Scotland decorated standing stones and cup-marked rocks in recumbent stone circles suggest they were sited towards the movements of the moon. In western Ireland the Boheh stone - one of the few decorated rocks in the region - provides a view of Croagh Patrick such that the setting sun 'rolls down' the northern slope twice a year. Given that rock art was being created over about two millennia, it is reasonable to suppose that its meaning and intent was subject to many developments, some of which would be quite localised either geographically or temporally.



Circular motifs with animals, from Galician rock art.

Altered states

Over the last ten years rock art seems to have become all-but synonymous with suggestions that the images were created in 'shamanic' altered states of consciousness [ASC]. One of Bradley's first papers on rock art, back in 1989, dealt with aspects of entoptics in European rock art, especially the so-called 'tunnel experience' [2]. In *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe* Bradley notes that in prehistoric Galician rock art, incomplete animals are depicted sometimes, as if they were entering the surface of the stone. This is similar to

relatively modern rock art created by the southern African San peoples, who are known to have been users of hallucinogenic plants.

The rock art of the British Isles is characterised by cup and ring marks. While these are not 'entoptics', Bradley develops Lewis-Williams and Dowson's suggestion that they might have developed as a reference to the tunnel imagery experienced in some ASC. Furthermore, he proposes that the same imagery was incorporated into passage graves and, later, henge monuments.

'There is no reason to suppose that, once certain images had been recognised as socially significant, their meanings were immutable. . . . their significance could very well have changed.' The ethnographic literature shows very clearly that rock art can have several different layers of meaning. It is likely that the same was true in the past. Specifically, Bradley suggests that the 'tunnel vision' imagery may have become intertwined with idea of restricted access to the centre. With the development of henges the same motif was extended to the landscape as a whole. 'By that stage the circular designs might have become the ideal representation of place.' Indeed, many different cultures see the world as a sequence of circles or spheres, imitating the perceptions of a person in an open landscape.

In summary, Bradley states that 'The cup and ring so typical

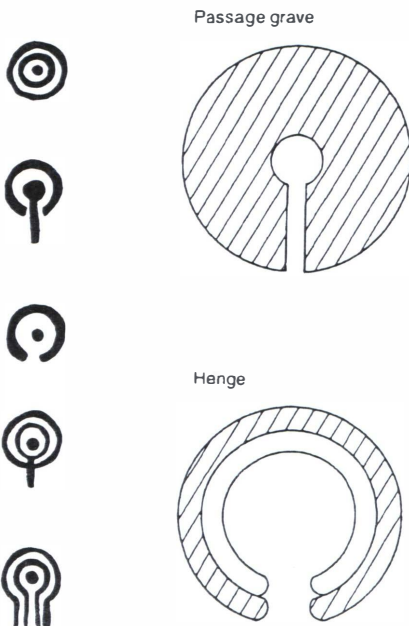
of British and Irish rock art is such a powerful symbol because it can encapsulate so many different relationships.'

Bradley acknowledges that his interpretation of rock art is most unlikely to exhaust the original significance. 'Nor', he states, 'is it wise to imagine that these ideas can be taken literally. Even supposing that the motifs do express a circular perception of space and that their organisation reflects certain aspects of social relations, that structure might well represent an ideal and could have little to do with the realities of everyday life. Indeed, the art might refer not to the present at all; it could have charted the relationships of people in the past, and in doing so it might have been tracing stories of a mythological character.'

Reconsidering the foundations of landscape archaeology

Although Bradley uses several detailed field studies as this basis for his interpretation, he acknowledges that there is considerable more potential from detailed studies of the topography of prehistoric rock art. Further, while he admits that 'It may be satisfying to have reduced so much material to the semblance of order . . . these schemes have still to prove their usefulness over a wider area.'

Bradley sums up his work by propounding that if his ideas have anything to commend them, they should have a major implication for landscape archaeology as ' . . . we can use the evidence of rock art to expand our knowledge of the settlement pattern in that enigmatic period before the development of lasting settlements and land boundaries.' Such an approach requires a break down of the distinction all-too-often made by academic archaeologists between the study of land use and settlements, and a different



Similarities between cup-and-ring carvings, passage graves and henge monuments.



The carved rock at Roughing Linn, Northumberland.
This view is a reconstruction by Aaron Watson as the site is now within woodland.

bunch of prehistorians who take a greater interest in material culture and monuments. Indeed, the last sentence of *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe* prophetically declares 'In learning how to study [rock art] we must reconsider the very foundations of landscape archaeology.'

So, *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe* is far more than a landmark in the study of prehistoric rock art - it promises to be a spring board for further innovative

approaches to the wider issues of prehistoric landscapes. I am tempted to proclaim this the archaeology book of 1997, even though I am writing this just a few days after the midsummer solstice; if a better one does appear in the next six months then it'll be of unprecedented content and clarity of expression. So, despite the rather hefty price - even for the paperback edition - *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe* is essential reading for *At the Edge* readers.

Notes:

1: R. Bradley, *Altering the Earth*, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 1993. Those who have back issues of *Mercian Mysteries* handy, may want to see my summary of *Altering the Earth* in issue No.21 (Nov 1994) p1-3.

2: R. Bradley, 'Death and entrances: a contextual analysis of megalithic art', *Current Anthropology* Vol.30(1), 1989, p68-75.

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Narrow Road to the Deep North

As suggested in two previous articles in this issue, 'tunnel visions' are considered an important aspect of altered states of consciousness associated with rock art. Jeremy Harte explores some aspects of 'tunnel visions' and related altered states.

Imagine the scene. Over the swelling waves a Viking longship lurches home, heavy with plunder from a raid. Crouched by the tiller, a bearded warrior spins out the lonely watch telling the crew tales of a yet more daring journey - the ride of a hero-image through darkness to the realm of the dead. 'That's funny', pipes up a Celtic monk lying bound in the corner, 'a mate of mine saw just the same thing when he was given up for dead'. 'Never!', chorus the Norsemen, 'do tell us more about it . . .'

Well, I admit it doesn't sound very likely. But how else can we explain how the hell-ride of Scandinavian legend comes to share so many features with the otherworld visions of mediaeval Christianity? The pagan skalds had a very clear idea of the road to the land of the dead. Hermodr's ride to seek Baldur involves a long journey northward through dark valleys, the crossing of the golden Gjallar bridge, and a leap over a great wall separating the world of the dead from the living (Sturluson 1954 [c1223]: 83). Many other stories ring the changes on the journey through danger and the dark; Hading goes through mist and darkness, crosses a river full of weapons, and comes to a wall too high to be leapt over. In the eerie journey of Thorkill through a land of eternal darkness, we again encounter a river crossed by a bridge of gold, and the journey ends at the walled stronghold of the demonic dead and their lord Geirrodr (Ellis 1943: 172).

Meanwhile on the other side of the North Sea, a Scottish thegn lies stretched out dead. Suddenly he opens his eyes, rises from the bed and tells a strange story. He had been taken to a long, deep valley, going north-east, where he saw souls in torment: suddenly it

grew dark, and the devils were on him. His angelic guide returns, scatters them, and takes him another way, to a long high wall which cannot be crossed, yet somehow he finds himself on the other side, among blessed spirits - then suddenly it is time to go home (Bede 1968 [731]: 289).

Other Christian visionaries also went down deep, dark valleys and came to walls surrounding the realm of the blessed, and many report having to cross a narrow bridge, with torments in store for those who fell off it (Os 1932: 35, 48). The parallels between the two traditions of otherworld journeys are so close that there are some which are neither one thing nor the other. Eric the Norwegian travelled to what may have been Odin's Acre or the Earthly Paradise. At any rate the route involved penetrating a dark forest, crossing a bridge, and passing through the jaws of a dragon - just like the many hell-visitors who are swallowed and excreted by the dragon who eats souls (Power 1985: 160; Seymour 1930).

Admittedly Eric's journey is a fiction, heavily laced with the

spirit of Celtic fantasy. But the earlier narratives, pagan and Christian alike, refer to something real. The deathbed visions of the afterlife all quote the people to whom they happened - Drycthelm in 692, the monk of Wenlock in 717, Tundal in 1148, and so on (Carozzi 1994). Their spiritual authority depends on their factual basis, since the visionaries are being offered a preview of what is in store for the rest of us. The pagan hell-rides, by contrast, are myths and not memorates, but nevertheless they depend for imaginative force on their conformity to the otherworld geography which was actually being traversed in spirit journeys or the dreams of the wise.

The two kinds of religion involved were growing at the same time, the eighth to twelfth centuries. There is nothing to suggest that Christian experience represents a reworking of earlier, pagan forms - in fact some of the motifs, such as the bridge, seem to have come from outside of Europe altogether (Stone 1996). But it is hard to see how ideas can have been shared amongst two religious communities at war with each other. Can it be that they are both drawing on deeper, archetypal themes? Should we expect all otherworld visions, regardless of religious context, to share a mythical geography?

Something like this approach can be found in the study of



The Alskog Stone from Denmark, with scenes often interpreted as Otherworld journeys.

deathbed visions, now that they have been rediscovered, scrubbed clean of hellfire and repackaged as Near-Death Experiences. Unless you are going to take these accounts as veridical experiences of the next life, it makes sense to explain the leading features which they share as derived in some way from our common physiology. On this hypothesis, feelings of joy derive from the release of natural opiates, the commonly perceived tunnel and light are subjective forms generated by a disinhibited visual cortex, the life review results from random activation of the memory in the limbic system, and so on (Blackmore 1993). Some of these neurophysiological effects are specific to the process of dying, but others are to be expected in all dissociated states. So it would make sense for an Irish monk and a Viking seer to have similar experiences when they leave their bodies, just as modern Americans are reported as having the same near-death experiences as Hindus and Papuans.

This sounds persuasive - but wait. The visions from mediaeval deathbeds, like the hell-rides, have a repertoire of features in common but these

are not the same features which we find today's in near-death experiences. In the mediaeval accounts, there is no tunnel and the journey does not begin with a tremendous light. There is no life review. There is no mystical vision. Instead the travellers report a perilous bridge, a dark valley, impassable walls, and lots and lots of really ugly demons (Zaleski 1987).

The only feature common to the return from death, now and then, is the individual's turning to a more spiritual life.

Drycthelm sold all his goods, went into a monastery, and bathed for penance in the icy midwinter waters of the river Tweed. Most modern visionaries don't go quite that far.

Of course the work done on the biochemical correlates of visionary experience has been fruitful. It is just that, whatever our natural predispositions to certain sorts of experience, culture will transform them so radically as to make it impossible to predict, on physical grounds, what we will think or see *in extremis*. It is very tempting, once connections have been revealed between certain mystical experiences and the workings of the brain, to put these discoveries together into a single comprehensive theory, a kind of neurophysiological model of what ought to happen in trance - complete with tunnels, entoptics and all the trimmings. Assuming that this represents the natural form of out-of-the-body experience, to which all anatomically modern humans will conform, it follows that the visionaries of prehistory will have seen just this (Lewis-Williams 1991). Then they will have rushed off and recorded it in the form of paintings or carvings for the benefit of their contemporaries (or, maybe, for that of the archaeologists). It is easy to be certain about prehistory: we know so little about it. But turn to the middle ages - when

visionaries flourished, if they ever did - and what relationship do the things they saw bear to the neurophysiological template? Not a lot. Worse, as the Viking/Christian parallels show, there may well be a common reality behind their experiences which is not, as far as we can tell, neuro-physiological. It seems that we still have a long way to go before we understand the ways of the Otherworld.

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Latvian rock art

VALTARS GRIVINS has previously written about Latvian culture and archaeology in *At the Edge* No.3. He welcomes contact with researchers interested in Baltic traditional customs, beliefs and history. His address is Mr V Grivins, P N Koceni, Valmieras Raj, LV-4220, Latvia.

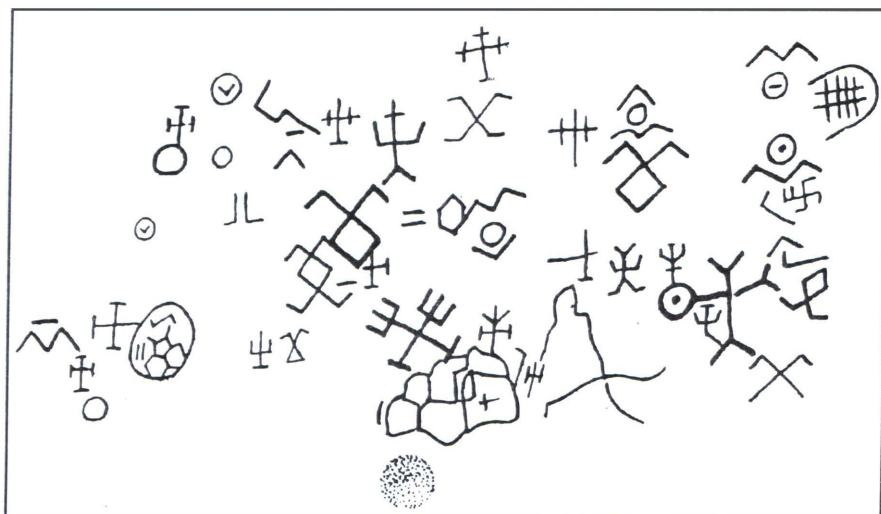
At the end of August 1986, Latvian naturalist Guntis Enins was breaking through thick bushes and wind-fallen wood, which had made the glacial valley of the River Brasla almost impassable. He made his way to the last previously-unobserved rock face in the canyon, hoping to find a new cave or other interesting natural feature. What he actually found was something much more exclusive, and opened a new page in the cultural history of Latvia.

In the newspaper *Rigas Balss* (9th March 1995) Enins wrote about his impressions of that time: 'At one moment I even endeavoured to move like a monkey through and over bushes. Then I noticed a little lighter place in front of myself and after just a few minutes I was standing at a small, almost white, rock. I stared at this like some bewitched character in our folk-tales. My assistants were all stuck somewhere back in Brasla's "jungles", so quite alone I looked at this rock, out of which deeply engraved but incomprehensible signs, similar to old hieroglyphical writing, stared at me.' (See fig. 1.)

Eleven years have passed since that day. About thirty more petroglyphs pecked into sandstone rocks have now been discovered and the future promises new discoveries. But were petroglyphs unknown in Latvia before 1986? If we understand petroglyphs only as carvings on rocks then the answer is 'Yes' [1]. Although various signs engraved in stones were well-known, none of the soviet historians and archaeologists (and before 1990 all of them were 'soviet' in Latvia) had devoted themselves to serious research of these monuments. It was not

fashionable or helpful to future careers to be publicly interested in Latvian spiritual culture, religion and world outlook during the time of Russian occupation. All articles from that time concerning such themes were full of diacritical materialism and look today like badly-written funny stories rather than scientific papers. Official doctrine was *Ex oriente lux* e.g. no writing, no developed religion or science among Baltic tribes before contact with Slavs and, later, Germans. Thus, such amusing ideas could arise as that proposed by the archaeologist J. Urtans (we shall meet him again later) who thinks that the enormous number of Velns (Devil's) stones, caves, ravines, etc in Latvia is a reflection of a Velns' cult which, according to him, was widespread in Baltic countries two or three thousand years ago.

Eliade, Dumezil, Wirth are names without any meaning for most of our archaeologists even today. To illustrate their elevated abilities to interpret sacred places, I will give more example. Fig 2. shows the Velns' stone in the Jekabpils' district of Latvia. It is 6.5 metres long and 3.5 metres wide with four small and one larger cup marks, although the larger mark is not a circle or semi-circle but rhomb-shaped. Urtans interpreted that mark as 'a foot print of a large horseshoe' because Velns is often depicted in folk-tales as having one human leg and one



Petroglyphs found in 1986 on the bank of the River Brasla (with cup mark, bottom centre)

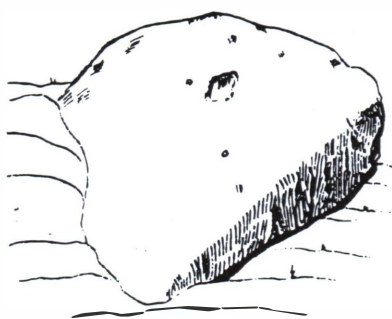


Fig. 2: Velns' stone, Jekabpils' district, Latvia.

leg which is either that of a horse or a cow. It seems the honourable academic has found a new breed of horses with quadrangular hooves.

Nevertheless, Urtans is considered in Latvia to be one of the most competent researchers of holy places (or, in the words of academics, 'cult places of pagan worship') even though his estimation of the meaning and age of newly-discovered petroglyph sites is still rather trivial. In 1988 Enins published the first wider account of his discovery in the magazine *Avots*. Another magazine, *Karogs*, then

requested two scientists to write articles about these 'mystical' signs. One of them was Urtans, who wrote in the fourth issue of *Karogs* in 1988: 'it is most credible that newly discovered signs were carved in rock in the late middle ages (16th to 17th centuries)'. Urtans propounded this presumption because of parallels between the Virtaka rock motifs and so-called 'property marks' (fig. 3) which were used by Latvians until the first part of the nineteenth century. These property marks were engraved on household objects or handicrafts to provide evidence for their belonging to a specific man or family, as well as being used on little boards (fig. 4) that served as debt and tax 'books' for the native Laotians who had become serfs after the German conquest. Property marks should be understood as early heraldic devices, from which developed (perhaps, more properly, regressed) the marks of the middle ages.

Despite Urtans' views, only some of the Virtaka petroglyphs can be interpreted as 'property marks'. Later, Urtans found parallels (seen only by himself) between the Virtaka rock and

western European paleolithic rock art.

A quite different view on these matters is seen in the article of another scientist-linguist, K. Karulis. In contrast to Urtans he sees in the signs on Virtaka's rock 'writing from a definite stage of development that is called ideographical writing'. So when writing about Latvian petroglyphs (and not only in Latvia) we are faced with the inevitable inferences based only on prior assumptions and immaterial evidence.

Trying to decipher the meaning of these signs we must first try to clarify what each motif represents. Is it 'pure art', or a symbol for the deities carved during magical activities (as Enins supposes), or are we looking at a form of writing? And, if it is writing, then which type - pictographical, ideographical, syllabic or alphabetical? Or maybe a synthesis of all these types?

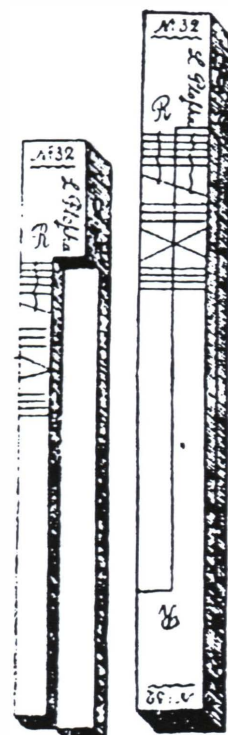
When analysing Latvian petroglyphs critically then this last option seems to correspond best with the real state of things. We see on the rocks a system of writing which has retained very ancient elements that were not imitated when



Fig. 3: Various Latvian property marks.



Fig. 4: Medieval tallies used for recording debts and taxes.



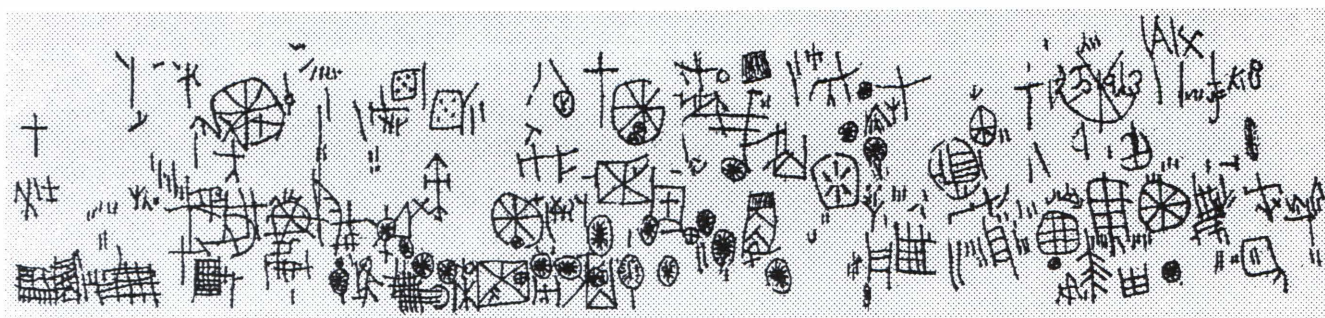


Fig. 6: Sign writing on rock from the River Gauja.

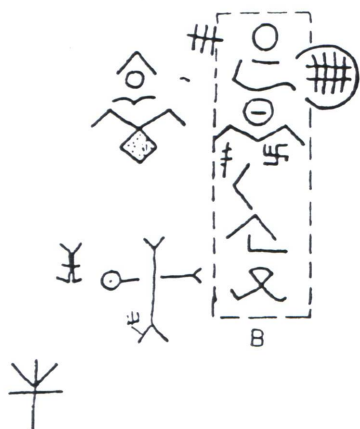


Fig. 5: A group of signs from Virtaka. Karulis translates these as follows: 'on the top is the sun (symbol of the sky). Under it a horizontal line (Earth) is located, under which a tortuous snake (the oldest symbol of animate creatures connected with the Earth), then we see the Otherworld's sun (symbol of the sun-circle with the bird's sign inside, which symbolises the soul flying away), then Otherworld hills (zigzag line, which symbolised hills in ancient cultures thousands of years ago when it was already the symbol of the Mother as well). It seems that the signs under this line are depicting various forces dwelling under the earth . . . ' (Karulis 1988).

more developed characters emerged. This approach is confirmed by the whole spectrum of Baltic culture, where archaism and the lack of outside influence are characteristic (as discussed in my article in *At the Edge* No.3). Quite the same picture is seen in other cultures where writing was connected with the sacred expression of the origins of life (and Eliade has suggested that for ancient people all life was one great theophany) as the course of development was conservative, with a tendency to maintain existing features.

Bearing this in mind, let us also consider that the creators of the petroglyphs script were people no less intelligent than we are today, and having the same needs as we consider important. We can then begin to decipher this writing. Although little has been done in this field, let us look at the more perceptive researchers whose ideas could lead us toward a better understanding of our ancestors. The attitude of academic archaeologists is clear already and linguists have said nothing with the exception of Karulis. He not only identified

rock art signs as ideographs, but also discussed their possible meaning in the lives of ancient people: 'Magical signs followed all the life-course of ancient men. It was wide and complex, corresponding to a mythological world-view that has the characteristics of a definite system. Maybe a feeling of the world's totality was more clearly expressed by ancient than by modern people. To understand this totality correctly, and to remember from age to age the principles of the world's order (formation structure) out of which the conditions that determine everyday life follow, the foundations of this was depicted at the many holy places, usually in hard material (stone).' (Karulis 1988)

This approach helps lead us to deeper understanding of sign writing, although I cannot agree fully with Karulis' explanations. All the signs he regards as ideographical symbols reflecting the mythological structure of the world (fig. 5). I think that such translation is too simplified and can be used only at separate places. When we look at fig. 6, what do we see? Mythological symbols? I suggest not.

Obviously it is writing. Although we cannot read it today, further work should enable us to decipher it in the future.

I would like to mention here the discoveries of Ojaz Ozolins, some of which were also mentioned in my article in *At the Edge* No.3, which are confirming the main ideas of Karulis. These show how the world's sacred order was reflected in rocks, although more closely related to a definite territory. Figs 7 and 8 show two fragments from two stones which, according to Ozolins, depict ancient maps. He found that the motifs are describing some territory and community of people. It is easy to recognise crosses in both illustrations, which in turn are recognisable as symbols of the World Tree. Most interesting is Ozolins' suggestions that these World Trees are about family trees or, in other words, lineages of groups of related people who settled their territory in accordance with the principles of the World Tree growing and bifurcating.

Ozolins has devoted much time to this research and found that place names, mutual correspondence of holy places,



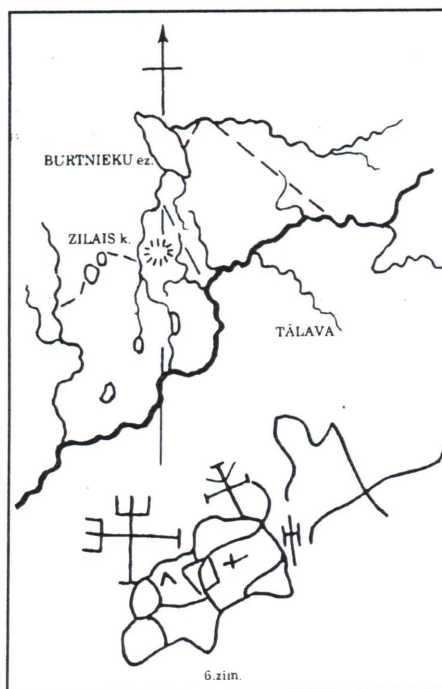
Figs 7 and 8: Possible maps on rocks and their connection with different regions of Latvia.

ornamentation of folk costumes, and depictions on rocks are all creating a unified system based on an ancient world order that included territorial divisions, religion, social structure, etc.

For the sake of truth, I should point out that one part of Ozolins' hypothesis has still to be confirmed and more research is necessary. (Those readers interested in these themes should bear in mind that more extensive information will be available when I succeed in starting an English language magazine concerned with Baltic geomancy, history, culture and religion. If anyone is willing to help further this project, please contact me now at the address given at the start of this article.)

There are several problems affecting the work of rock art writing research in Latvia. Very hindering is the unavailability of surveys. Although about thirty rocks have been discovered, only a few have been accurately recorded and published. The majority of these sites have been accurately recorded but their discoverer, Enins, wants to be the first to publish articles. He is afraid that somebody else could make their own record of these rocks and publish first, so Enins has kept his discoveries secret. So other researchers are forced to search again for already-discovered rock art sites.

Secondly, research is often hindered because of insufficient knowledge of ancient writings and the history of writing in



general, which is caused by enormous shortages of information in Latvia. This problem also hinders access to western works on rock art, holy places, traditions and the culture of ancient civilisations. Without a more complete knowledge and view of ancient monuments we will not be able to interpret Latvian examples. Very essential is the exchange of information between researchers in Baltic and western countries. I hope everybody reading this article will understand the necessity and possible benefits. If those on the western side comprehend the current critical economic situation for amateur and professional researchers in Latvia, and can find possible ways to help with information and maybe with equipment then we could solve most of the problems.

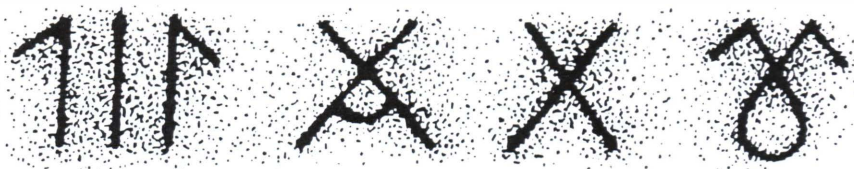


Fig 9: Signs engraved in a sandstone cave on the River Svetupe, (Svetupe translates as 'holy river').

Notes:

1: Signs engraved in sandstone rock had been discovered already by G. Enins in 1971, when he investigated and surveyed several sacred caves occupied (used for 'cult' purposes) by ancient Livs-Finno-Ugrians and Baltic tribes who had lived in the territory of present Latvia beside Baltic tribes in the thirteenth century. Nevertheless neither he, nor J. Urtans who excavated these caves in 1973, paid any attention to these signs (fig. 9) which were mentioned briefly in his report and then forgotten for about 15 years.

2: Velns (Devil) is an ancient Baltic mythological being, personifying chaos and the irrational power of Nature. He is connected with the earth and with water. There are close parallels between the Baltic Velns and the Indian Vritra who is personified as Indra's 'enemy' manifesting as a dragon, or a giant snake or serpent; in some versions of the myth as the primeval hill. Although the Christian church adapted Velns' name in the thirteenth century and used it to denote Satan, in folklore Velns never personified absolute evil (Velns is an evil being but his evil often transforms into good against his will). Neither can we find any traces of Velns' worship. The origins of the large number of Velns' caves, rocks, ravines, etc in Latvia can be explained in the same way as, around the world, Christian clergy attempted to blacken and eliminate the pagan holy places.



Notes on some cup marked stones and rocks near Kenmore, and their folklore

Rev J.B. Mackenzie

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Vol. 34 (1899-1900) p330.

But to return to the spot from which I have been looking at the cup marks at my feet, I am struck by the extreme scarcity of any real tradition regarding them. Only once do I remember hearing anything genuine. There had been a good deal of illness in some miserable old houses where I was visiting, and in speaking to an old man about it, I expressed my wonder that the people did not remove some boulders which obstructed the light out of the small windows, and the drainage about the doors; and added, that it could easily be done and would make the houses more healthy. No doubt it would be agreed, but then it would not do to destroy these old worship stones (*Clachain Aoraidh*). He said that there had been one near his own door which was very much in the way, but that he had, with great labour dug a hole into which he had let it drop and covered it up, for it would never do to incur the anger of the spiritual beings by breaking it up. This was more than thirty years ago. The boulders seemed to me natural and of no significance; but my attention being thus, called to them I found similar stones at almost every old house or site - many of them, undoubtedly, placed there of intention. Some of them had cup marks, but on many I could find none. I also found that any sort of hollow in a stone, even when it seemed to me natural,

was sufficient to give it a sacred character; and that some of these stones were undoubtedly ancient boundary markers, while others had been used in the preparation of food stuffs. All have a certain mystery about them, and several still preserve around them traditions of the possession of supernatural powers. So far as I have examined them, these stones seem to fall into three groups:-

The first group consists of rock cut cups, often single, but more generally in groups, with at times an elaborate arrangement of circles and connecting channels. The meaning of these is very obscure. Nothing which I have ever heard seemed authentic or simple enough - very simple the ideas must have been, or they would never have been so common or widespread. In the second group, the stones present a natural hollow, smoothed and shaped a little by art. This form may have been used, among other purposes, for the pounding and rubbing down of grains before the invention of the quern. The third group, which is almost certainly of later date, comprises the entirely artificial stone cups (small ones often called elf cups) and stone basins used for the manufacture of pot barley. The last two groups have generally some tradition associated with them. Many of these have been

Examples of folklore associated with rock art 'discovered' by Graeme Chappell.

collected. They most frequently relate to the power of curing different kinds of diseases possessed by them. This, however, was not by any means their only power.

There is one belonging to the second group, in a rock near Scallasaig in Colonsay, and the tradition with regard to it is, that by means of it the chief of the McPhees could get south wind when he chose. Hence it was called *Tobar na gaoith deas* ('the well of the south wind').

Another of this third group is at Kilchattan, also in Colonsay. Like the one at Riskbuie it is of the pot barley type, and cut out of the solid rock. It is near the ruins of the church of St Chattan, and of the house of the chief of M'Mhurich (Currie), who owned this portion of the island. His house was called *Tigh an tom dreis* (Bramble Knoll House), and according to highland custom he himself was known as *Fear an tom dreis*. As chief of the more fertile moiety of the island, M'Mhurich was, of course, a much greater man than M'Phee at Scallasaig. If M'Phee could get south wind, M'Mhurich could by means of his rock basin get any wind he liked. The basin was called *Cuidh Chattan*. It is quite a mistake to say, as I have heard at times said, that any Currie could operate the well. It was only *fear an tom dreis* himself who could do it. He could get the wind to blow from any quarter he wished, by the

simple expedient of clearing out any rubbish which it might contain on to the side from which the the wind was desired. It was sure to come and blow it back again into the basin. Originally I am persuaded it was not any accidental rubbish which was cleared out, but (with undoubtedly certain appropriate ceremonies) the offering of food to the supernatural powers, which has been left in the basin when last used for its primary purpose of making pot barley.

Before passing from the subject of rock basins and cups, I may mention as bearing on the subject a tradition I heard from my friend, Rev J. M'Lean of Grantully. We were

about half way up Glen Lyon, when he pointed out to me some isolated patches of rock by the road side, remarking that they indicated the limit to which the plague had reached in the Glen; St Adamnan, it seems, stayed its further progress by boring a hole in one of these rocks - catching the plague and stopping it up in the hole. In the time at my disposal I could not find on any of the rocks any artificial markings which might have started this tradition.

Note:

Kenmore is situated about 15 miles east of the Achnabrech site. Colonsay is an island off the coast of Argyll and is probably visible from the Achnabrech site.

On ancient sculpturing of cup and concentric rings etc

Professor J.Y. Simpson

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Vol.6 1864-66 p57, 59

The rock upon which the first and largest collection of concentric rings and cups at Achnabreach is placed has a Gaelic name, which, according to John Kerr, an old shepherd brought up on the farm, is

Leachd-nan-sleagher- the rock of the spears. Mr Henry D. Graham, to whom I am much indebted for drawings of the Achnabreach sculptures and others, believes the word to be *Leach-nan-sluagh*- the rock of the hosts or gatherings. The Rev Mr M'Bride has perhaps more happily suggested it to be *Leachd-nan-slochd*- the rock of the pits or impressions. The rock itself, let me add, is in a position which commands a charming view of the waters of Loch Gilp and Loch Fyne, with the distant and magnificent hills of Arran as a gigantic background.

Cargill, Perthshire In the thirteenth volume of the first statistical account of Scotland, a description of the parish of Cargill was published about fifty years ago. It is therein stated, "near the village of Cargill may be seen some erect stones of considerable magnitude, having the figure of the moon and stars cut out on them, and are probably the rude remains of pagan superstition. The corn field where these stones stand is called Moonshade to this day" The stones thus marked, and standing in Moonshade or Moonbutt's field, were dug around and under, and buried some half century ago in the agricultural improvements of the ground.

In Newbigging, which borders upon the Moonshades field, he raised a stone, a corner of which jutted from the earth. It is a slab of grey whinstone, three feet six inches in length,



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two feet one inch in breadth, and seven inches in thickness. Upon one of its faces are five concentric circles and some isolated cups.

The cup-and-ring marks and similar sculptures of Scotland: a survey of the Southern Counties Part II.

W.B. Morris

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Vol.100 (1967-68) p.53

In hard sandstone or greywacke a cup one inch in diameter and half an inch deep takes ten minutes to make with a pointed piece of quartz - I have one which I made myself. Others at different dates in history may have passed the time of day doing this too, for it is a soothing, if noise producing, activity. People in Islay are still deepening existing cup marks, which themselves may come from a pre-Christian era, in a wishing ceremony which seems to be a relic, perhaps of sun worship (list Nos. 46a, 49, and 50). The large, smooth and carefully rounded cups on the very hard gneiss rocks along the coasts of Tiree and western Argyll, many of which were listed by the late L.M. Mann and other writers in these proceedings and elsewhere, nearly all occur on rocks which lie only a few feet above or below the present sea level. In view of the change in sea level since prehistoric times it seems probable that until not so many centuries ago these big cups were well below the sea, if they existed. I have however, statements from two elderly fishermen - crofters from different parts of the island of Tiree that they personally used these cup-marks in their youth, when fishing, for grinding ground-bait such as cockles,

limpets, mussels, pieces of crab and the like. This ground-bait was thrown into the sea adjoining the cup-marks to attract fish. These two gentlemen, and indeed quite a number of other residents on the island of Tiree and in its vicinity, pointed out to me that practically all these big smooth cups are sited at the best fishing points of the area.

. . . This explanation seems to fit the facts very well. But no one on Tiree was able to explain to me why similar smooth round cups were made one and a half miles inland in one solitary instance on the top of a hill . . . or on the near vertical sides of the Ringing stones. I was indebted to the owner of Millport Croft (No.104) and Mr J. Davies for the word *Croichtican* (or *Crotagan*), the Gaelic word for these big smooth cups. Perhaps 'bait mortars' might be a good name for them in English. They are probably between a hundred and several hundred years old, but in some cases, in western Argyll, they may be older. Knocking-stones, mortars and grinding-mills have as a rule been omitted, but some are included where carved out of the living rock, or in very large slabs. A rather special example is the rock basin or cup on Seil island (no.77) which has been used for what one might call neo-pagan purposes within living memory. The widow of the late farmer there states that in her youth, one day each spring this basin had by custom to be filled with milk. If it was not so filled, the 'wee folk' (faies) would see that the cows gave no milk that summer. The Kerrera ferryman, to whom I told this, said that on Point of Sleat Farm in Skye when he was a boy there had been exactly the same custom. An Islay resident tells me that the same custom existed there, too, until not long ago and I have received a similar account from Miss Marrion Campbell concerning

the cup marked stone near the waterfall beside the old chapel at cove, Knapdale (NR 748767). In Argyll and its isles the pagan gods are not so long dead.

No.46a Kildalton chapel. Kildalton. NR458509. On the flagstone base of the Kildalton Cross 7yds. north of chapel. On flagstones NE corner was a cup mark, similar in size and traditional use to that at

Kilchoman (list No.50) - broken off and stolen c.1920.

No.48 Kilchiaran 1. Kilchoman. NR204601. 20yds. north of road, 20yds WSW. of church. On flat slab (6ft x 3ft, 6inch high) over 18 cups up to 6.5 inch in diam., 4inch deep 2 cups penetrate through slab. Cups said to have been enlarged by former 'wishing' rite. see No.50.

No.50 Kilchoman. NR216632. At foot of Celtic cross 20yds east of church in cemetery. On slate slab (3ft square 0.25 ft high, forming base of cross) 4 basins up to 7 inch diam. 6 inch deep - still used in 'wishing' or 'fertility' rite by turning a pestle 3 revolutions with the sun and leaving a coin. Full of pennies on 1968 visit. Church officer collects periodically. Pagan sun worship relic?

No.77 Seil. Clachan Seil. NM776187. 550yds W. of road, 260yds W. of wall, 15yds E. of ditch. On ground level slate outcrop (4.5ft x 2.5ft) - basin 5 inch deep and cup. Until c. 50 years ago basin was filled with milk each spring for the 'wee folk'. Located by Mrs C. Leckie. Legend if not filled, cows would yield no milk that summer.

No.82 Balphetrish 2. NM027487. 15yds above high water. 150yds N. of loch's NE. corner. On huge granite boulder (6ft high) - on all its surfaces except undersides - 33 cups of the crotagan type, except some are on vertical surfaces. Locally known as 'The Ringing stone' or *Clach na Choir*.

. . . and some other reports of folklore associated with cup and ring marked rocks:

On the arch-theory e-mail list on 2nd August 1996 (archived at <http://noir.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/arch-theory/>) D.J. Shepherd wrote:

'In Finland, cup-marks occur in association with some Iron Age burial mounds and cremation field cemeteries. In the nineteenth century there were reports from rural areas of Finland of people using ancient stones with cup-marks as places to leave traditional 'first-fruits' offerings.'

A few days later, on 13th August, R.A.B. Price followed this up with the following e-mail to the same list:

' . . . at Dinas Dinorwic, a small hillfort near Caernarfon, a friend and I, whilst walking the site, found some large stones on which there appeared to be some odd cup-marks. They were saucer-sized depressions with a line-like channel leading into them. We were fascinated. After a lot of local enquiries we discovered that these "cup-marks" were actually nineteenth century (apparently) and had been used for some sort of pyrotechnics. The depression was filled with gunpowder, the channel also filled as a fuse.'

Graeme Chappell

Rock art resources on the Internet

GRAEME CHAPPELL has done extensive fieldwork over the last eight years on the moors of North and West Yorkshire studying rock art. In early 1997 he created the Petroglyph UK web site to highlight some of his work.

A version of this article with all the necessary URL's to the WWW sites mentioned has been uploaded to At the Edge's WWW site at <http://www.gmtnet.co.uk/indigo/edge/atehome.htm> - follow the links to 'Current Issue'.

When at its best the Internet can serve as a vast reference library giving access to information from all around the planet. Archaeological resources are well represented in this 'library' and the study of petroglyphs and pictographs (carved and painted images) or rock art is perhaps one of its most developed areas in terms of Internet presence.

The Internet's e-mail facilities allow organisations and individuals with an interest in rock art to easily contact one another, in particular the Rock art list server, which is a system that circulates e-mail messages to all the people subscribed to the rock art mailing list. By posting e-mail to the central list server people can join in discussions on rock art related topics, request information about specific rock art sites, or announce forthcoming rock art events, etc. The list server has also proved a useful channel to highlight threatened rock art sites around the world. Recent postings to the list have drawn attention to a proposed dam on the river Indus in northern Pakistan, this project, if it goes ahead, will submerge an estimated 30,000 rock carvings. In 1994 a similar dam project threatened Palaeolithic rock engravings in the Coa Valley,

Portugal. Postings to the rock art list raised international awareness and support for a campaign of scientific and media pressure, which, combined with a change of government in Portugal, saw work on the dam suspended. During 1996 the Coa Valley area became designated an archaeological park.

The main sources of rock-art information on the Internet are provided by sites on the World Wide Web. There are currently over 1000 rock art related sites listed on RockArtNet - this is an extensive web site set up by the Footsteps of Man Archaeological Co-operative Society based in Italy. Realising the potential of the Internet, they have embarked on ambitious projects to assemble information and links to all rock art web sites around the world. 'With the Web we are working on the biggest data "store" ever created by man . . . We need to exchange data (texts) and images (pictures and tracings): it's time to propose to all Rock Art researchers and organisations the finding of a place in the web, creating a specific URL for each Rock Art site and/or culture. . . Studying Rock Art is one of the best ways to understand prehistoric conceptuality.'

The information already assembled on RockArtNet shows

clearly that throughout history and all over the world, people have had an instinctive urge to paint or carve images and symbols relating to their environment and their beliefs. The following small selection of Web sites will hopefully provide a 'taster' of what is available on the Internet. Some of the earliest examples of rock art are found in the palaeolithic cave paintings at Lascaux, Cosquer and Chauvet caves in France. Web pages for these sites not only display pictures of the fascinating cave paintings (images of rhino, bison, lion, and horse, etc.) but also give a whole range of information about the discoveries and investigations at these cave sites. In the case of Chauvet cave (discovered in December 1994), text and images were available on the Internet in a matter of weeks after the discovery, thus providing access to information long before it was published in book form.

Another Internet based project is the compilation of a database of rock art images and symbols. The database serves to illustrate how similar images have been used by different cultures world wide, this is shown to good effect on the South Korean Web site for Chonzonri Kaksok petroglyphs. Here images show a large rock with many ancient carvings including geometric patterns of concentric circles and diamond shapes. The resemblance to Irish passage grave art is striking, with similar designs being found at both Newgrange and Loughcrew - sites where this Korean carved stone would not look out of place!

The whale watching Web site is dedicated to all things cetacean. Among the web pages are a selection with text and images illustrating rock art from the White Sea region in the north-west corner of Russia. These ancient rock carvings, (ascribed to Finno-Ugrian tribes, around 3500BC), allow a glimpse of prehistoric life with scenes of people in boats hunting beluga whales and later

cutting up the whale meat. Other scenes feature moose, reindeer and wildfowl, with swan like birds occurring often. While such images portray the everyday food resources of prehistoric hunters, the Web sites texts suggests other scenes also point to totemistic beliefs relating to these same animals, with images of bird-headed humans or a whale-tailed human with 'shamans rattles' and the swans also being linked to later beliefs about the sun and the ancestral otherworld.

As might be expected, rock art in the USA is extensively covered by Web sites, this being a reflection of the more organised nature of the research in the US. Rock-art associations, active academics, and a large number of a vocational researchers, have professionally recorded many rock art sites, and setup Web pages to display the results of their work. For example the Petroglyph National Monument in New Mexico is a protected area within the National Parks scheme, setup to highlight prehistoric Indian rock art. Along a 17 mile stretch of basaltic rock escarpment there are over 15,000 petroglyphs, some of which date back several thousand years. Much of the rock art dates from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries (classed as the Rio Grande style) and is attributed to Pueblo Indian farmers. Images include mythological animals and birds, ceremonial anthropomorphs and star beings. To the modern Pueblo Indians the rock art is part of their living culture and heritage, with ceremonial sites along the escarpment still in use today.

Finally to return closer to home, northern England and Scotland has a wealth of prehistoric rock art yet very few Web sites exist to highlight it. The Kilmartin house Web site uses a 'point and click' map to provide information about the archaeological sites of the Kilmartin valley in Argyll, an area that has been dubbed a 'ritual landscape' and includes

several petroglyph sites such as the large areas of cup and ring marked rock at Achnabreck. The Petroglyph UK Web site currently focuses on the cup and ring carved rocks on the North Yorkshire Moors and contains images and text detailing some of the sites in that region.

Rock art of a different style and date in the form of Scotland's Pictish symbol stones are detailed on the Archaeologia Web site this site details each class of carving along with individual Web pages for many of the carved stones showing the symbols and other information.

As people all over the world increasingly use the Internet to provide access to information on their regional rock art, it has become possible to embark on a virtual world tour, to 'visit and view' rock art at sites all around the Earth, a chance to see rock art at sites (often sacred places) which few people would have the necessary funds to physically visit!

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Campaign for the protection of Stoney Littleton long barrow

Everyone will be familiar with the ongoing problems at Stonehenge and the dreadful state of the site, the visitor facilities and the perennial access problems. On a smaller scale these problems exist at a number of less well-known, but as important sites. Vandalism is the main problem. However the response to these and other problems exists at a number of less well-known but important sites. As a result we are faced with the prospect of ancient sacred sites and monuments being closed to public access while their custodians whinge about lack of finance to deal with the problem.

I would like to draw your attention to the pitiful state of Stoney Littleton long barrow, near Wellow, Somerset. Anyone who has visited this site in the recent years will have been disappointed to find that access to the interior of the barrow has been denied. The roofs of the chambers and passage have been shored up and notices inform us that repair works are under way, but in the last three years no noticeable

improvements seem to have been made at all. On the contrary, the condition of the barrow has sadly deteriorated. An ugly makeshift timber door has been erected across the entrance to the ante-chamber, behind which is another, steel barrier. This hoarding has been vandalised recently - no mean feat as 4" x 2" timber has been broken in two in an unsuccessful attempt to gain entry. In the process the lintel stone has been damaged.

Notwithstanding this act of wilful vandalism by persons unknown, we notice another excavation trench has been cut across the back of the mound. This has been left exposed to the elements with the pathetic application of polythene sheet in a vain attempt to keep the rain out. An earlier trench on the opposite side of the mound has been inadequately filled, leaving a pronounced depression. Is it not normal practice to restore excavations to their original condition in the case of sites such as this?

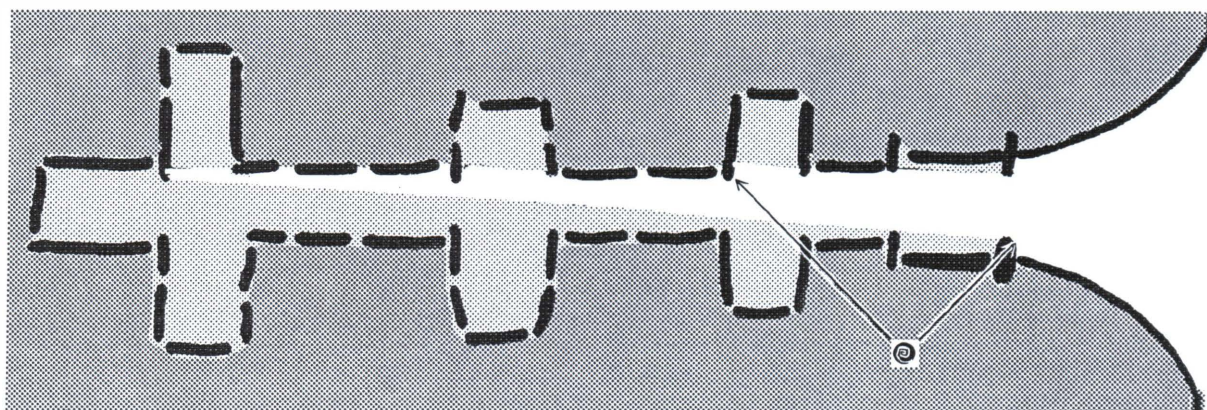
The supreme irony of this avoidable situation can be found

on the inscribed slab set into the wall of one of the entrance horns where we are informed that the barrow was restored in 1958 following the *wilful neglect* of its previous owners. Is this a case of history repeating itself?

It is our understanding that it is a prosecutable offence to injure or deface this monument. The present state of this monument suggests someone is breaking the law. We wonder what exactly is the position of English Heritage on this?

They blame lack of money. We would also blame a lack of imagination. What is needed is a fresh approach to the management of our ancient sacred sites and we would like to urge English Heritage to reconsider their policy towards this problem. Stoney Littleton is an important test case. If you would like to register your concern about Stoney Littleton please write to:

Nick King esq
Acting Director SW Region
Historic Properties South West
29 Queen Square
Bristol
BS1 4ND



Plan of Stoney Littleton long barrow showing how the midwinter sunrise illuminates two prominent ammonite casts in the stones. (Based on research by T. Meaden published in *3rd Stone* No.21, 1995.)



From Danny Sullivan
editor of *The Ley Hunter*

Clash over ideology

I was intrigued to see Nigel Pennick ruminating on the contentious subject of leys in 'Leys as ideology' in *At the Edge* No. 7. Clearly Mr Pennick is suffering from a mild amnesia or is being deliberately provocative as he quickly dashes through a pocket history of ley hunting, concluding that '... ley hunting is infused with messianic New Age creeds which empower it as a myth for the saving of our planet from the threat of your choice. And this is how the subject stands today'.

Anyone with a serious interest in the study of archaic landscape lines and features will know that this is far from the truth. If I wasn't aware that Mr Pennick's deliberate distancing of himself from *TLH* (he resigned his columnist's chair without explanation and has sent back unopened complimentary copies of the journal since) I would conclude that he was ill-informed. In fact the spirit line approach to leys and landscape lines and alignments was in full flow before he resigned his post. It is inconceivable that he was unaware of these new avenues of research. This makes his claim about the state of ley research today a nonsense.

I might even go as far as to say that his earlier enthusiastic

promotion of leys and dowsing in the 1970s was partly responsible for the plethora of New Age nonsense which now saturates the modern public perception of leys.

Whilst his observations on the 'dod' are enlightening, Mr Pennick is fooling himself if he thinks his remarks about the believability of Watkins' original ley hypothesis are in any way iconoclastic. Williams and Bellamy had plenty to say about this in the 1980s (along with a lot of crap too). Paul Devereux has written on a number of occasions that Watkins was mistaken and may well have been recording the routes of disused funeral paths and corpse roads in his old straight tracks, the broad body of which were chance alignments. And more recently I have lectured and written along similar lines stating that there is no such thing as a ley, Watkinsian or New Age, except in the eye of the beholder.

If the shortcomings of this article are the result of a deliberate attempt at provocation I can only conclude that Mr Pennick has too much time on his hands. On the other hand, if they are due to his ignorance I suggest he takes out a subscription to *TLH* straight away before he puts his other foot in his mouth.

Response from Nigel Pennick

Mr Sullivan's personal hostility towards me as exemplified in this letter is a perfect example of what I was referring to in my article when I wrote of the 'factionalism and conflict, competition and empire-building' in the world of ley hunting. In his rush to be unpleasant, Mr Sullivan has appeared to have misunderstood the purpose of my article. From the title, it is crystal clear that it is about ideology. It is not a history of leys with fulsome praise for all the wonderful men who have spent great personal effort on

ley hunting at a time when it was neither fashionable nor profitable to do so. There have been enough of such accounts already.

The statement 'there is no such thing as a ley ... except in the eye of the beholder' from a man who edits a magazine that calls itself *The Ley Hunter* is amazing. Surely the magazine can no longer have the title now the editor has rejected the whole idea. So, as Mr Sullivan appears to agree wholeheartedly with my criticisms of ley hunting ideology, why is he so critical of me? I can only surmise that his hostility is explained in the comment, totally unrelated to the content of my article, that I had 'distanced' myself deliberately from his magazine.

Deliberately or accidentally, I know not which, he misrepresents my contributions to *The Ley Hunter* as a 'post', as though I were an employee, which I was not. My musings in that magazine, and everything I ever wrote there from 1970 onwards, were offered freely and without payment, in goodwill. I put it on record here that the reason that I stopped writing for *TLH* (as Mr Sullivan surely knows) was after I was personally misrepresented, *ad hominem*, in an anonymous review of my publication *Anima Loci*. Naturally, when this happened, I pointed out to the then editor that, if proper debate of ideas is to take place, then criticism of *ideas* is acceptable, but criticism of *the man* is not. This distinction seemed not to be understood and, instead of a friendly reply, I was berated further in private correspondence in which I saw the dark side of Earth Mysteries clearly for the first time. The anal language of Mr Sullivan's present letter with regard to Bellamy and Williams, 'a lot of crap', is at the same degraded level, without the basic respect one expects from a civilised person.

Whether one likes it or not personally, ley lines with all their certainties and uncertainties have passed into

contemporary folklore. It can only be by analysing the many present day manifestations of the idea current in certain sections of society that one can understand the underlying need to look for lines on the landscape, whether they are there or not. Of course, those who examine an area of study from a pluralistic viewpoint will suffer periodically unpleasant attacks in print by the spokesmen of various factions who believe that they have the answer. That is the price that one expects to pay, for it has been so always.

From Andrew Green

Getting a grip on ghosts

May I thank Bob Trubshaw for his review of my sixteenth book dealing with ghosts and hauntings - *Haunted Sussex Today* - but take issue with him regarding 'the lack of clear references to sources and no mention of any efforts to check the accuracy of reported events ...'

For an 87 page publication at £5.99 there was no intention of offering an academic reference work, let alone hope of achieving such a standard in a book aimed at the popular market. It is obviously necessary to cater for serious folklorists by producing an extensively researched work of a deep scientific and parapsychological level, but perhaps my earlier work (shown in the bibliography), *Ghost Hunting - A Practical Guide* (published in 1972 by Garnstone with a paperback edition by Mayflower in 1976) may correct the impression that I was merely trying to provide nursery tales for the benefit of less discerning adults.

I would point out that unfortunately some serious comments had to be deleted due to the eventual length of the publication, but I would assure readers that after some 25 years

of study, lecturing and tutoring adult classes I attempt to ensure that cases appearing in my books are, in my belief, completely genuine. For this reason a number of the more 'popular' hauntings were omitted from *Haunted Sussex Today* and will be from any future titles. Readers can of course always contact the witnesses that I have named in the reports and assess their comments for themselves and, as has occurred in a number of cases, confirmation of the reports has been received from previously unknown sources.

Please be patient Mr Trubshaw. My next hardback work might provide the information you require, but there is enough evidence of authenticity of incidents to be found in the records of the Society for Psychical Research, of which I am a member, that have been available for over a hundred years.

[At the Edge No.10 will include several articles taking a more serious approach to ghost lore and related phenomena. R.N.T.]

From Martin Burroughs

Tribal quibbles

Jeremy Harte's piece on the tribe in early English history in *At the Edge* No.7 was as interesting as usual, but I found myself questioning parts of it. He seems to underestimate the importance of religious tribal names: surely at least the Brigantes, Lugii and Eboraci deserve to be mentioned in that context? And perhaps the Setantii too.

I also find it hard to see any justification in deciding that 'Cornovii' is a war reference. I would have said that in Romano-British symbolism the horn was more likely to be connected with abundance or death than thinking that the Cornovii acted like goats in battle.

If Jeremy accepts that the Parisii were immigrants, as he says, then surely he must accept that the evidence of their highly destructive burial customs strongly suggests that they came from those areas of north-east France which exhibit the same customs? There seems to be good evidence to link the two Parisii, what evidence causes him to think otherwise?

Incidentally, ogam is an alphabet, not a language.

From Gavin Smith

Assimilation, massacre - or both?

The articles by myself and Jeremy Harte in *At the Edge* No.7 make an interesting contrast. Mine, without saying so in as many words, assumes a fairly high degree of cultural and population continuity throughout the Dark Ages (AD 400-700). Jeremy's article suggests chillingly that 'ethnic cleansing' (not dissimilar to that recently in Bosnia) may have occurred - so that sometime, say about 450, Germanic newcomers forcibly ousted the natives, took over their fields, and the land ran with blood from shore to shore.

The fact is, either of us could be right. The question is, what sorts of evidence can be marshalled either way? A number of lines of evidence are capable of pursuit, and to an extent a variety of academics are pursuing them.

Let me offer a suggestion. In some localities ethnic cleansing *did* occur, and in others it probably *did not*. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles are on Jeremy's side in a few well-remembered instances. At *Andredescester* (Pevensey castle in Sussex) in 491 the Saxons slaughtered the occupants. But in the battle of 477 the Britons had fled into the forest of the Weald. After the battle of *Crecganford* (Crayford in Kent) in 457, defeated Britons 'fled to London'.

The 'dark (or black) earth' found at London from later Roman times (but also at Southwark and Staines in the London region) has been claimed as evidence that these Romano-British towns degenerated into agricultural sites. But dark earth in Denmark is cited as evidence of the presence of a Viking town. Macphail and Scaise (in Bird, *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*, Surrey Archaeological Society, 1987) indeed imply that dark earth may be an urban deposit of biodegradable thatch, animal dung, mud walls and floors (and presumably hearth cinders). Perhaps this is to be compared to the deposits cleared out annually by the inhabitants of St Kilda from the houses they shared with their animals.

A reasonable case could be made on archaeological, documentary and linguistic grounds that the London region, including Surrey and the Weald, was a British zone into historical times, and its population and cultural life a *mixture* of British and Germanic *foederati* (mercenaries) invited by post-Roman authorities to defend London and whose cemeteries may be the early

Germanic sites identified in north-east Surrey and elsewhere (J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur; Poulton in Bird op. cit.*).

Walhtun (Britons' *tun*) place-names occur in the London side of Surrey, and linguistically can be no earlier than the late seventh century. *Walh* can mean 'Briton' or 'slave', and in place-names is taken to mean Britons in a slavish relationship *vis a vis* Germanic-speakers naming the place. Could they be related to the high population of 'slaves' the Domesday Book records 400 years later for areas like the north Hampshire and east Surrey downlands? Were many of the slaves of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman eras the human remnants (who locally might be in the majority) of a declined Romano-British villa system become 'Anglo-Saxon' manor? Bede proudly recalls that St Wilfrid freed the slaves that came with the royal gift of the estate of Selsey in the Sussex of the 680s. One suspects that somewhere in this mess of royalty, class, race, language and law lie paths to the truth about the Dark Ages.

Perhaps southern England in 400-700 was a bit like Bosnia in the 1990s. In some places ethnic cleansing; in others, cultural fusion, fraternity or domination.

Just a note on how place-name data *cannot* be used. The element *-waru* is most unlikely to mean 'tribe'. A name like *Clifware* (modern Clewer by Windsor) cannot mean 'the tribe of the cliff' but *could* mean 'the congregation focused on the religious site at the cliff' (i.e. at the sacred hill of Windsor, site of an Anglo-Saxon synod). The same name, *Clifwara*, is recorded in 778 for Cliffe, by the seventh century monastery of Hoo on the highly geomantic promontory between the Thames and Medway estuaries. Bede's (and Jeremy's) *Meon wara* thus could be the name given to the community (Germanic, British or probably both) associated with the valley of the Celtic-named river Meon and focused on a religious site

later inherited by the minster at the place subsequently known as Meon. As such, it is strongly reminiscent of a Celtic names like *Cructan* (Creechbarrow in Somerset), if '(sacred) barrow of the Tone valley' (now marked by a 'hill' dedicated to St Michael) and later Celtic-Latin-Germanic names like Axminster, 'the minster of the Axe valley' (Ekwall, *English Place-Names* OUP 1960).

The organising and arbitrating power of religion, at the interface of paganism and Christianity, and of Celtic and Germanic speakers, in the southern England of the Dark Ages has been much underestimated.

From Sylvia Gibson

Crescents came first

Reading that this issue is 'themed' on rock art, and having been inspired by my last three holidays visiting prehistoric painted caves in France and Spain to a theory on them, I would like to contribute this for readers' opinions.

I believe that cave painting results from humankind realising that Earth and Moon are intimately linked; and believing that they work together to replace or resurrect the animals that humans depended on absolutely for survival.

Humans knew the Earth fed them, and the other animals who lived on it, endlessly fruitful and generous, but that they had to kill animals to live themselves, and perhaps thought that this required reparation by them.

They saw the Moon endlessly and always growing from a sliver of a crescent, waxing full, wasting away to nothing and gone, but always, always returning reborn. They saw these miraculous crescents in the horns of bison, aurochs, reindeer, ibex, rhinos; the tusks of mammoths; the hooves of horses; the cloven hooves (showing *both* crescents, waxing and waning) of bison, aurochs,

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deer, ibex; the claws and incisors of bears.

In painting the horns are often shown in 'twisted perspective' (i.e. facing front) though the rest of the animal is in profile, and cloven hooves are sometimes shown this way too, to acknowledge the 'crescent procession' that was the source of their inspiration.

To link themselves to (and help with) the rebirth of the crescent-showing animals, they engraved and painted representations of them in the endless womb and internal passages of the Earth who would bring them to birth again.

Although they did not paint human beings they knew that, in a minor way, they too had crescents (or moon shapes) on their bodies - the 'half-moon' that appears at the base of finger and thumb nails. In some caves, they would stencil (or sometimes print) their hand shapes on to the walls. They also trailed their finger-ends through soft clay, leaving the endless meandering 'macaroni' trails seemingly aimlessly.

They also pushed their finger-ends into clay shapes of animals, made and left in some caves, as if to unite with them. In one particular cave, Gargas, famously, there are many hand shape stencils which seem to show missing finger-ends - as if these fingertips were being pressed into and buried in the cave walls and being united with the Earth Mother's womb.

I am sure that there are many other values and meanings in cave painting and engravings:

- that there are other, very specific, meanings attached to each kind of animal viz.

Leroi-Gourhan's theory of 'bison-women';

- initiation: monarch 'cells/retreats'; whole cave systems devoted to different kinds of 'rites of passage' (sic!);

- shamanism: some indication of assumption of animal shape/nature/powers; but, as ancestor of all these: 'crescent came first'!



At the Edge is pleased to serve up another lavish collation of obscure articles.

Compiled by Jeremy Harte [JH] and Bob Trubshaw [RT].

Prehistoric pilgrimage

The striking profile of Croagh Patrick makes it a 'topographical point of reference'. It is still one of the major places of pilgrimage in Ireland but, as Chris Corlett reveals in 'Prehistoric pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick', *Archaeology Ireland* No.40 (Summer 1997) p8-11, there is evidence for such practices dating back to the Neolithic. [RT]

Fourknocks complex

The reconstructed chamber tomb at Fourknocks, Co. Meath, was 'mentioned' in the Abstracts in *ATE* No.7. However, there are other, now less conspicuous, prehistoric monuments close by. Together they would have dominated the ridge when viewed from the south. G. Cooney, 'A tale of two mounds', *Archaeology Ireland* No.40 (Summer 1997) p17-19. [RT]

Gogmagog gobbledigook

Tom Lethbridge's attempts in the 1950s to excavate a hill figure at Wandlebury near Cambridge are subjected to serious criticisms. Given that Lethbridge was well-known as a practical joker, was this, as one of his friends remarked, his 'best jape so far'? W.A. Clark 'Dowsing Gogmagog', *3rd Stone*

No.27 (Autumn 1997) p8-10 & 20. [RT]

Little-known megaliths

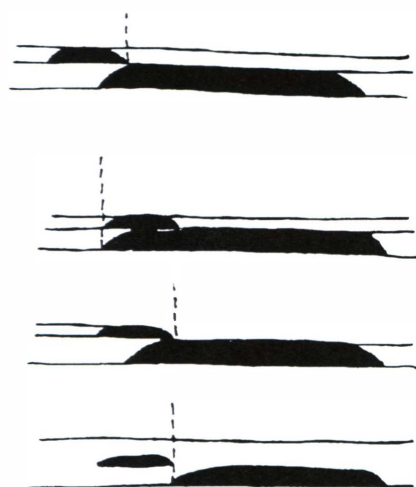
To the north of Bath University is a major Iron Age hill fort. Nearby are the remains of various megalithic rows and circles, although these have been curiously ignored over the centuries by both antiquarians and archaeologists. The most prominent of these stones are on open-access land and are easy to visit. P. Quinn, 'Bathampton Down, Somerset: Reassessment of a neglected megalithic landscape', *3rd Stone* No.27 (Autumn 1997) p11-12. [RT]

Straight speaking

The editor of *The Ley Hunter* journal tries to define what the eponymous 'ley' means today - rather difficult when most people think you mean 'energy lines' and what you are really trying to define - shamanistic spirit paths - is perhaps best researched as a sub-topic of cognitive science. Danny Sullivan's verdict is 'there is no such thing as a ley. As a defined thing or phenomenon in its own right, it does not exist. . . . It is time to bury the ley.' One is simply left wondering what *The Ley Hunter* will be called in future. D. Sullivan, 'Ley lines: dead and buried', *3rd Stone* No.27 (Autumn 1997) p13-17. [RT]

Straight substantiation

Yet more examples of straight 'shamanistic spirit paths' from around the world are outlined in the latest *The Ley Hunter Journal* - and one dismissal of acclaimed 'death road'. A separate and well-researched article provides convincing evidence for funeral paths and 'spirit paths' in western England. 'Lines on the landscape', *The Ley Hunter Journal* No.128 (July 1997) p12-13; P. Quinn, 'Mapping the journey of the soul', *ibid.* p14-18. [RT]



Different types of 'concordance' between barrows and distant landscape features.
See 'Barrows and skylines'.

Let the spirit fly

The theme of the shaman's flight as a bird is one on which geomants have had a lot to say recently. Now from the Aegean civilisation of Thera comes another perspective on birds and the divine. Karen Polinger Foster, 'A flight of swallows', *American Journal of Archaeology* 99 (1995) p409-25, reinterprets a room at Akrotiri with frescos of seven swallows, comparing it to the religious iconography of the region, and concludes that the birds (which are in fighting display) are not mere decoration but a sign of divine epiphany. [JH]

Barrows and skylines

The idea of the shape of standing stones mimicking features on the horizon has been around in earth mysteries circles for some years. Helen Woodley looks at the subtle contours of the Lincolnshire Wolds and finds that the shape and location of the Neolithic barrows also show evidence for 'concordance' with the wider landscape. The poor state of preservation of barrows, and the lack of attunement of the modern mind to such a subtle and complex interaction in the landscape, make this a difficult topic – but one worth pursuing.

H. Woodley, 'Meeting 6000 year-old survivors – topographical relationships between long barrows and the Lincolnshire Wolds landscape', *The Ley Hunter Journal*, No.128 (July 1997) p27-31. [RT]

Maeshowe – Orkney's 'Newgrange'

It seems likely that a special 'light slit' – now destroyed – originally existed over the door of the passage to the Neolithic passage tomb at Maeshowe on Orkney. As with the better-known example of such a 'light slit' at Newgrange, this would let a beam of sunlight into the closed mound on certain days. Moreover, from the tomb the hills of Hoy island in the south-west mark specific sunsets in the solar calendar. E.W. MacKie, 'Maeshowe and the winter solstice: ceremonial aspects of the Orkney Grooved Ware culture', *Antiquity* Vol.71 (1997) p338-59. [RT]

New dates for rock art

At two fields in Co Donegal, there are rock outcrops engraved with cup and ring markings. Nothing unusual about that – except that the rocks have also been singled out for decoration with crosses and sacred hearts in a display of religious continuity across the millennia. M.A.M. Van Hoek, 'Early Christian rock art at Clehalgh, Co. Donegal', *Ulster J. of Archaeology* 56 (1993) pp139-147 attributes this to the attractions of the place as a site for contemplation. [JH]

Altered states of Celtic mythology

References to magical brews and foods abound in the Celtic legends. The penchant of the bards for metaphor means that the true identity of these foods may be disguised. By looking at the

references to red-speckled and crimson foods, there is substantial evidence that all these are allusions to the red-capped *Amanita muscaria* mushrooms – long been considered a candidate for the mystical 'soma' of the Indo-European shamanistic religions. E.R. Laurie and T. White in their article 'Speckled snake, brother of birch: *Amanita muscaria* motifs in Celtic Legends', *Shaman's Drum* No.44 1997 pp53-65, provide much detailed argument and discussion for the fascinating suggestion. [RT]
[Thanks to Mara Freeman for sending a copy of this article.]

Thornborough Neolithic monument complex

The henge site at Thornborough, North Yorks, is known to overlie an early Neolithic cursus. Recent crop mark photography, followed up by excavation has revealed an additional enclosure, itself superseded by three other henges – which themselves revealed three distinct phases of construction. 'The establishment of this impressive monument complex during the later Neolithic was to strikingly affect wider patterns of activity across the surrounding landscape.' J. Harding, 'Recent fieldwork at the Neolithic monument complex of Thornborough, North Yorkshire', *Past* No.26 (July 1997) p4-5. [RT]

Pious fraud

Perhaps understandably, the geomantic press didn't waste any time on Marlo Morgan's *Mutant Message Down Under*, an outrageous New Age scam by a woman who pretended to have gone walkabout with the last true aborigines, to have been taken to their underground chambers and



handed on the usual truisms about the impending ecological catastrophe etc. But wait! Now the real Aborigines have come at the issue, from a different perspective: they want the book banned, not on the grounds of its deceitful claims or its milk-and-water spirituality, but because Morgan as a white woman has hijacked their role as the voice of native wisdom. And reading between the lines, it seems that the New Age earth mysticism on which anthropologists have been looking down for years is now being accepted as a kind of *lingua franca* by indigenous peoples worldwide. A complex tale, and Les Hiatt unravels it in 'A New Age for an old people', *Quadrant* 41vi (1997) pp35-40. [JH]

How many miles to Babylon?

New understandings of an ancient world are presented in 'The shape of the cosmos according to cuneiform sources' by Margaret Huxley, *Trans. of the Royal Asiatic Soc.* 7 (1997) ppl89-198. The cosmos, in case you were wondering, comprises two concentric stone spheres, the stars being painted on the underside of the inner one: the spheres are turning around a hinge near the Plough. Inside, the known world is flat, circular and surrounded by a river, with Babylon in the middle. New readings of cuneiform texts help sort out the meaning of schematic Babylonian world maps. [JH]

Sufi's choice

In 'A Sufi legacy in Tunis: prayer and the Shadhiliyya', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997) pp255-277, Richard J.A. McGregor traces the cult of the mystic Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili of the thirteenth century, preserved by a religious brotherhood through worship at his meditation cave and a place where he saw visions. Both sites are marked by mosques. In Islam, as in Christianity, the

reverence of saints and cults of particular places are viewed with unease by more austere reformers as they look like continuations of animism. [JH]

Scheduled for development

Richard T. Mortel has searched the history of Mecca for the sacred buildings which acted as schools for the study of Islamic law. In 'Madrasas in Mecca during the medieval period: a descriptive study based on literary sources', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 60 (1997) pp236-252 he presents an account of all 23. Unfortunately there is no trace of these buildings outside the literature, their remains having been bulldozed in an intensive 1950s development programme – does that sound familiar? [JH]

Half-baked ideas at Stone

G.W.S. Barrow was called on to present a paper on the Stone of Scone at a conference on inauguration stones in Carinthia – yes, Virginia, there are such things. Published as 'Observations on the coronation stone of Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* 76 (1997) pp115-121, his conclusions do not support the hypothesis in Pat Gerber's rather muddled book, which claimed that the Westminster stone is a fake palmed off on Edward I by the conquered Scots. The stone was originally offered up to St Edward at Westminster as a piece of loot, but gradually it regained its sacred status as part of the English regalia. [JH]

Monumental follies

A series of connections between the greatest wonder of the ancient world and England's largest county are traced in 'Yorkshire and the Great Pyramid' by Philip Atkins, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 68 (1996) pp225-230. Charles

Piazzi Smyth died in 1900 after a career of interpreting pyramid prophecy and is buried near Ripon – Moses Cotworth came from Acomb – while David Davidson (whose *The Great Pyramid, Its Divine Message* is the bulkiest tome of the lot) was a Leeds sewage engineer in real life. [JH]

The hand of God

Is the appreciation of the beautiful and numinous in nature itself a natural aspect of the human species? Or does it point to a supernatural realm of values manifesting in the physical world? Readers who have followed Philip Heselton's exposition of Jay Appleton's ideas will be familiar with Darwinian formulations on the adaptive value of our response to landscape, and E.O. Wilson went one further in his biophilia theory by suggesting that the idea of beauty itself had survival value. Now Mark Wynn presents a critique in 'Beauty, providence and the biophilia hypothesis', *Heythrop Journal* 38 (1997) pp283-299, making the case for an argument from design by which beauty would be evidence of creation by a transcendent God. [JH]

Votive well a load of rubbish

The study of holy wells is dependent for its early evidence on a corpus of Roman shrines where the veneration of wells has left archaeological traces in the form of metal offerings, mostly coins. Now one of these sites is going to have to be crossed off the list. T.S.N. Moorhead re-examines an old site notebook in 'A reappraisal of the Roman coins found in J.W. Brookes' excavation of a late Roman well at Cunetio (Mildenhall), 1912', *Wiltshire Arch. & Nat. Hist. Magazine* 90 (1997) pp44-54, and finds that far from being votive, the coins seem to have been swept as rubbish by short-sighted workmen during the back filling of the well. [JH]

Bath at Bristol

The oldest surviving *mikvah* or Jewish ritual bath in Europe has been found at Jacobs Wells in Bristol, dated to c.1170. It forms part of a complex of Jewish sacred architecture around the city, including a synagogue in vaults under the church of St Giles – a rare piece of tolerant coexistence. This is the foundation on which the lottery-aided Judaica Project wants to build, setting up a multi-cultural visitor centre on Jewish ritual architecture and history in the city. *History Today* 47 vii (1997) pp27–8. [JH]

Small kingdom, not much used

Readers who have followed discussion of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic *regiones* in the last issue of *At the Edge* can now welcome another addition to their number. P.N. Wood in 'On the little kingdom of Craven', *Northern History* 32 (1996) pp1–20 outlines the history of an upland area around Settle in the West Riding, which after a mere 1200 years of lost independence as a Celtic kingdom has re-emerged as a district council. His survey compares it with other units of similar size and status throughout Dark Age Britain. [JH]

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Earthquake and earthlights

A Japanese amateur astronomer appears to have found that the ionosphere is locally 'distorted' a few days before a major earthquake. So far he has accurately predicted earthquakes in March and October 1996. Apparently, the tectonic strain affects plasma in the ionosphere – a scenario closely related to Paul Devereux's ideas that 'earth lights' were associated with tectonic strain, first proposed in his book *Earthlights* in 1982.

'Earthquake and world instability', *Northern Earth* No.71 (1997) p10–11; based on *Yomiuri Shimbun* (*Daily Yomiuri*) 18th Jan 1997. [RT]

Earthlights update

The aforementioned Paul Devereux updates the latests evidence for earthlights in a feature article for *Fortean Times* No.103 (October 1997) p26–31. This seems to be 'advance publicity' for a new book by Peter Brookesmith and Paul Devereux entitled *UFOS and UFOlogy* scheduled for publication by Blandford this October. [RT]

Holy places of Latvia

Valtar Grivins (who wrote the article on Latvian rock art in this issue of *At the Edge*) also writes about the holy hills, stone rows and springs of Latvia, particularly the 'holy hill' of Talava. 'Horg Stone', *Folkvang-Horg* No.3 (September 1997) p13–17. [RT]

Roman roads resented

Roads are more than just functional means for people to travel from place to place. As recent road-building shows, roads can be political and ideological symbols too. According to Rob Witcher, 'Roman roads may be resented as symbols of Roman power.' 'Roman roads that reshaped the land', *British Archaeology* No.27 (Sept 1997) p7. [RT]

Arthurian abundance

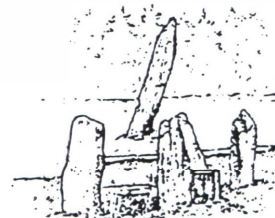
A series of articles in the latest *Pendragon* (Vol.26 No.3 Summer 1997) deal with the 'topography of Arthur'. Tintagel gets top billing, but many other sites get a look in too - including a well-argued suggestion that the little-known second battle of Badon (fought in 665) may have taken place near the Avebury area of Wiltshire. [RT]

Green Men and Wild Men

In a fascinating rethink of how medieval 'foliate faces' came to be termed 'Green Men' by Lady Raglan in 1939, Brandon Centerwall investigates inn signs, Wild Men and other 'relations' before concluding that Lady Raglan may, after all have been about right - but not for the reasons she thought! 'The name of the Green Man', *Folklore*, Vol.108 (1997) p25–33. [RT]

white DRAGON

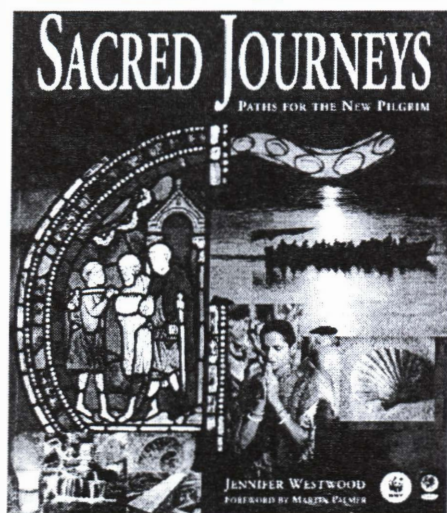
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REVIEWS R



Jennifer Westwood (ed) SACRED JOURNEYS Paths for the New Pilgrim

Gaia Books 1997
245 x 210 mm, 223 pages, fully
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£14.99

Reviewing the steady flow of new books which relate, sometimes tangentially, to 'past and place' is rarely as exciting as it might at first seem. All too often publishers impose overly 'commercial' restrictions on content, or commission authors who barely rise to the challenge taken on. Predictability rather than stimulation is often the result.

Sacred Journeys is the welcome exception to this scenario. The format is unusual - a lengthy 'background text' on pilgrimage by Jennifer Westwood is interspersed with two-page 'spreads' on sixty pilgrimage destinations, with each of these examples written

by contributors with special knowledge of the routes or places. The book design is first-rate and successfully combines sketch maps, colour photographs and adventurous typography.

The scope is truly international and includes the obvious - Mecca, Benares, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Santiago de Compostella, the 'Wailing Wall' and British examples such as Croag Patrick, Canterbury, Holywell and (perhaps contentiously) Glastonbury. Less obvious examples include war graves of the Somme, Sodo on Haiti, Chaco Canyon and Arunachala in India. The information provided in the brief two-page 'outlines' devoted to each destination is usually surprisingly informative, if clearly far from exhaustive.

However, these excellent summaries vie for precedence with the 'overview' provided by Jennifer Westwood. She is perhaps best known for her books on British folklore, *Atlas of Mysterious Places* and *Albion - a guide to legendary Britain*. Her writing has a deceptive clarity and lucidity - seemingly skating over the surface of the subject but nevertheless imparting an uncommon depth of understanding. But *Sacred Journeys* is not intended as a philosophical analysis of pilgrimage, but rather as an inspiration and practical resource for 'spiritual travellers'.

This book, like Martin and Nigel Palmer's *Sacred Britain - a guide to sacred sites and pilgrim routes of England, Scotland and Wales* (reviewed in *At the Edge*

No.7), is linked to the World Wide Life Fund's Sacred Land project. While clearly multi-faith in scope, *Sacred Journeys* shares with *Sacred Britain* the conspicuous absence of modern-day paganism - even the section on Glastonbury deals exclusively with the Christian mythology, apart from a short paragraph where we learn that 'Glastonbury is now also hailed as "the epicentre of the New Age in England", a center of converging ley lines and the "heart chakra" of planet Earth.'

However, this quibble does not seriously detract from a book which has been excellently brought together by all the contributors and the publishing team. Attractive and inspirational, this is a book which deserves to be 'dipped into' at frequent intervals as preparation for whatever 'spiritual journeys' life may allow.

Bob Trubshaw

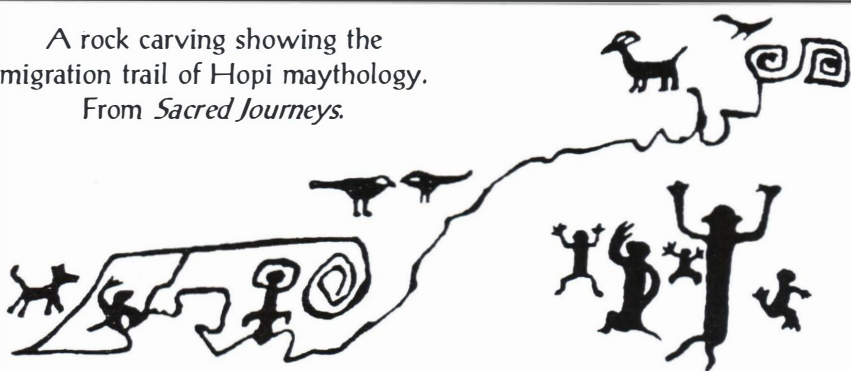
Adrian Bailey THE CAVES OF THE SUN:

The Origin of Mythology

Jonathan Cape 1997
312pp, illustrated, hardback,
£17.99.

The nineteenth century makes a comeback in *The Caves of the Sun*. While it is something more than an updated retread of the nature myth theory of Max Muller, it still makes for pretty depressing

A rock carving showing the
migration trail of Hopi maythology.
From *Sacred Journeys*.



reading. It starts with an introduction replete with disingenuous statements: 'Greek myths have become so influential that we are inclined to overlook the contributions of other mythologies - Osiris from Egypt: the Hindu Krishna, and the Scandinavians Thor and Odin and Balder' (page 1). 'Could our failure to understand our distant past be due to our method of approach and a strange reluctance to pursue a line of enquiry - well signposted with clues - to its conclusion?' (page 4). 'My researches suggested that little real progress has been made in the study of mythology and religion, symbol and folklore, since *The Golden Bough* was published at the turn of the century' (page 7).

One wonders where Adrian Bailey has been living. In these three extracts, literally pulled at random from the first few pages, we encapsulate the problems that bedevil this book. It is poorly researched - if it were otherwise then the first statement would not have been made, and the question would not have been asked. The last of the above quotations sums up the whole thing. Little real progress? Tell that to Jaan Puhvel, Bruce Lincoln, and the shades of Georges Dumézil and Mircea Eliade. Tell it to Miranda Green, Hilda Ellis Davidson, and the host of mythographers who have contributed to a growing dynamism in the field since J.G. Frazer departed this life. As for our alleged 'failure to understand our distant past' - space forbids even a sample list of the archaeologists and

anthropologists who in recent years have made great strides in promoting such an understanding.

Bailey's methodology is equally outmoded, and often unrealistic. For instance, on page 122 we read: 'The lame sun that limps towards the winter solstice confirms its deformity by the Sanskrit root PA, which gives *pada*, 'foot'; *padma*, 'lame'; *pani*, 'water'; but also *pur*, 'to burn'; from another set of 'burn' words comes *cudh* 'burn'; *cush*, 'to dry up'; and *cuth*, 'to limp'. Well, Sanskrit 'PA' does *not* give *pada* 'foot' which has a distinguished Indo-European heritage all of its own, and is itself the source of *padma* 'lame'. It does give rise to *pani*, because *pa* means 'pour', and it also reflects in *pane* 'hand (cupped for drinking)'. The word *pur* has nothing whatever to do with 'PA'. This kind of primitive monosyllabic etymology died the death years ago - and here it is meaningless. The idea behind this particular example is that it reflects the succession of summer/winter, sun/rain, and so on - Bailey's central thesis. In reality the idea justifies only the taking of philological liberties.

The book is littered with this kind of thing. "'Hood' or Woden, may be derived from an Old High German word *watan*, 'to gush out', and Robin from Robert, itself connected with the Old High German *hoppe*, 'horse'" (page 198). Not true, any of it. 'Mithras himself probably evolved in Persia from a borrowed Indian god Mitra' (page 215). Evidently he does not know that Mitra was common to both Vedic and

Avestan scriptures and is recognised as being one of the oldest *Indo-Iranian* deities. There are also sins of omission: triads and trichotomies are discussed with Hans Usener at the early extreme and Alan Dundes at the latest - but no mention of Georges Dumézil, though discussion ranges through the trifunctional triads. Three, we are told, represents the phases of the sun. The number seven is also discussed, but with only a brief mention of the most prominent natural heptad, Ursa Major, which has obvious and natural associations with septenary motifs in ancient myth and ritual. Instead it represents 'seven months of autumn and spring and the quickening of nature's womb' (page 105), as contrived a symbolism as you can hope to find anywhere.

Even if you can bring yourself to accept the theory, this is not good scholarship. Even the basic premise is fatally flawed. Nature myth, as has long been recognised, does not explain all myth. Cosmology does it better, but only when one understands that cosmology is not only about sun and moon, stars and sky, earth and sea. It is about defining the rules by which the cosmos operates, and by which we also live. It is about classification and Organisation, establishing boundaries and relationships, putting things in their place and time. The great irony is that no modern mythographer has ever denied the importance of the sun and other natural phenomena to ancient myth, though many reject the excesses of scholars like Max Muller and, later, the Frazerian school. If Adrian Bailey were to read books like Jaan Puhvel's *Comparative Mythology* (1987) or Bruce Lincoln's *Myth, Cosmos, and Society* (1986) it would open his eyes to where the study of myth is really going. And *The Caves of the Sun* is not even on the right road.

Alby Stone

THE CAULDRON

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Philip Heselton

MIRRORS OF MAGIC

Evoking the Spirit of the Dewponds

Capall Bann 1997
A5, 158 pages, illustrated,
paperback £9.95

Dewponds were once a ubiquitous feature in those parts of Britain where surface water was infrequent but the need to provide water for livestock was paramount. To describe them as 'man-made ponds' would somehow rob them of much of their mystique. However, Philip Heselton's book does nothing to diminish their mystique. He discusses their 'historical geography', methods of construction, regional variations plus an eclectic mixture of folklore, dowsing, Watkinsian leys, moon magic and much else.

The author may rightly be regarded as the founder father of earth mysteries and also has a unique personal approach to paganism. This background enables him to successfully providing both factual information on dewponds and many sources of stimulus to the imagination. Many of the dewponds may have dried out or been filled in, but this book reflects the rich and enduring mythos they have left.

Bob Trubshaw

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Graham Harvey

LISTENING PEOPLE SPEAKING EARTH

Contemporary

paganism

Hurst 1997
216 x 140 mm, 250 pages,
paperback, £9.95

At last - an objective introduction to what makes up the disparate activities and beliefs making up contemporary paganism. Strictly, the scope is narrower than the title suggests as the book deals with paganism in Britain rather than worldwide - but that is perhaps a strength rather than a weakness.

Harvey admits 'I am not necessarily convinced or enthralled by everything that Pagans do or say' but provides an informed but dispassionate overview of what pagans do and say. He stresses that he is not trying to define what pagans 'should' think. Chapters look at seasonal rituals, rites of passage, witchcraft, druidry, Germanic heathenism, goddess spirituality, ritual magic, shamanism plus 'detours' into related topics such as ecology and earth mysteries. The final chapter compares paganism to other religions and identifies why it is so often misunderstood. There is a brief attempt to look at the sources and influences on modern day paganism, but Harvey acknowledges that this has already been well covered by Ronald Hutton.

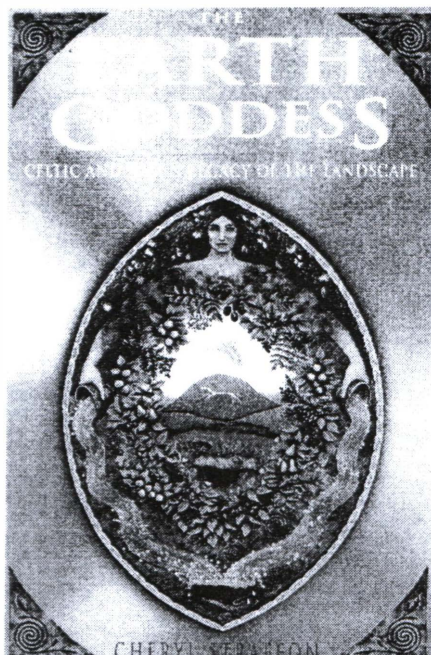
Inevitably with a work summarising so many different subjects, there are moments where emphasis might seem to be misplaced; but these moments are fairly few and far between and never weaken the overall points being presented. My favourite chapter has to be the very successful assessment of shamanism, which Harvey acknowledges is a 'hard-working word' which means different

things to different people. Almost as good is the none-too-flattering depiction of New Age enthusiasts. If there is one chapter which seems least successful, it is perhaps the one devoted to ritual magic where I would want to raise more questions about how many magic(k)ians actually regard themselves as pagan, and I find it hard to connect to the summaries of specific 'schools' of magic(k), such as Chaos Magic.

In the earth mysteries chapter popular 'truisms' are occasionally given a misleading credibility. I for one would prefer that the St Michael line were not described as a 'classic and popular' ley line (popular, yes but otherwise idiosyncratic and spurious). The all-too-often-published anecdote that Alfred Watkins had a vision of leys as a 'web of lines' is quoted but without the caveat that there is no evidence from Watkins' own writings of this experience and his son has denied that Alfred ever had such a vision. The short section on terrestrial zodiacs (TZs) also flounders in their ambiguity; I would suggest that one of the most perceptive comments is that by Philip Heselton to the effect that TZs do not exist on the ground, neither do they exist only 'in the head', but rather they exist in the way we create concepts of the landscape. However, such remarks are little more than nit-picking and do not detract from the overall scope of the discussions.

Given the complexity and inherent contradictions within modern day paganism, it is perhaps inevitable that Harvey's style of writing resorts to many qualified generalisations. Apart from this the book is clearly written and can be wholeheartedly recommended to anyone who wants a broad but nevertheless detailed understanding of the life-affirming and nature-celebrating customs that make up the differing facets of paganism.

Bob Trubshaw



Cheryl Straffon

THE EARTH GODDESS

Celtic and Pagan Legacy of the Landscape

Blandford 1997

240 x 160mm, 224 pages, 32
b&w photos, hardback, £16.99

Perhaps the distinguishing attribute of the 'earth mysteries' movement over the last two or three decades has been the attempt to make certain places - typically prehistoric megalith sites and holy wells - in to 'sacred places' again. Often the sites themselves are fairly inauspicious in physical appearance - a minor stone circle, an isolated standing stone, a rather overgrown or rubbish-filled spring, and sometimes nothing more than an intriguing place-name. It is almost as if the wish to invest a site in 'sacred significance' is triggered by the feeling that 'there must be more to this than what we can see'.

This attempt to make archaeological sites 'sacred' brings the earth mysterians into close proximity to modern-day

paganism. For many modern pagans the principal deity is a goddess, usually envisioned as a beneficent 'Mother Goddess'. A deeply-rooted popular myth among pagans is that the Neolithic religion was based around worship of a similar goddess, although there is no evidence to support anything more than local instances where female divinities of unknown character *may* have been venerated.

Cheryl Straffon is well-known in both earth mysteries and pagan circles. She has produced an earth mysteries magazine for the West Penwith area of Cornwall, *Meyn Mamvro*, since 1986 that has established a reputation for solid research and information on local sites, some of which has been compiled as a series of exemplary guide books. By the standards of earth mysteries researchers, her background is academically very sound - a graduate of both London and Cambridge Universities, where she studied English and Comparative Religion.

So, here we have someone with the experience and background to really get to grips with countering the academic insistence that the role of the 'Mother Goddess' in pre-Christian religions has been greatly overstated, and to present the case for the earth mysteries and modern-day pagan movements which tend to share the belief that goddess worship was, until comparatively recently, widespread in the British Isles.

In *The Earth Goddess* Ms Straffon provides an introductory section of about 80 pages which outlines the way in which 'goddesses' have been found in prehistoric, Romano-British and Celtic contexts, plus an overview of what she calls the 'pagan-Christian interface'. This is followed by an extensive gazetteer of sites throughout the British Isles that appear to be associated with the 'Earth Goddess'.

The Earth Goddess seems, therefore, to be an excellent

attempt to put across the case for the Goddess proponents. Unfortunately, the way in which all this evidence is presented fails to convince. 'Firstly, I have deliberately interpreted the term Earth Goddess in a very wide-ranging way' states the author in her introduction. Indeed, so wide-ranging is this approach that the introductory chapters come close to regarding any depiction of a female as a 'goddess'. No tutelary spirits, nymphs, or other 'acolytes' here - every female is a full-blown goddess. It is as if every statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the world today should be regarded as evidence for her being worshipped as a Goddess - whereas those with any understanding of Catholic beliefs and sensibilities will know that this is over-simplistic and, at a theological if not popular level, downright wrong.

In *The Earth Goddess* we are faced with page after page of false parallels and dodgy deductions. One of the most glaring is when Tacitus's descriptions of the worship of Nerthus in northern Gaul is followed by the sentence 'The other Goddess known to us from Anglo-Saxon times is Eostre or Ostara'. So, Tacitus's account of the *first century* has become knowledge of 'Anglo-Saxon times' in a

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different country some four or five hundred years later. And no indication that the Venerable Bede's contentious mention of Eostre is unsupported by any other evidence and is perhaps best considered as either a serious misunderstanding by Bede or a deliberate invention.

In similar vein, the section on Celtic myths begins with the Cailleach Bearea - the 'Old Woman of the Mountains'. Ms Straffon cautions us that 'the name Cailleach Bearea is widely used but little understood. Cailleach means old woman, crone or hag, but Bearea is a placename, the Bhéara or Beara Peninsula in Munster.' However, on the next page the author is supporting poorly referenced suggestions that 'the Cailleach was originally the Goddess of the land and nature' and on the following page we are informed, without qualification, that 'The other aspect of the Cailleach was as the harvest Goddess'. This deliberate widening of meaning of the 'little understood' Cailleach does little to help understanding.

In the section on the pagan-christian interface, we are told that '[The Blessed Virgin] Mary was probably named after the sea Goddess Mare and the epithet Stella Maris - star of the Sea - previously attributed to the Goddess Isis, Ishtar, Aphrodite and Venus, was given to her by St Jerome.' A graduate of Comparative Mythology might be expected know that, in Biblical times, the word 'Mary' was an honorific title (much as we might call a vicar 'Reverend') - although I do accept that the popular use of the similar-sounding epithet Stella Maris does cause confusion.

This approach of mixing fact with 'popular belief' and fancy verges on the ridiculous when the medieval carving of a mermaid on a chair in the church at Zennor - clearly an interesting Otherworld figure - is also deemed a 'potent manifestation' of the Goddess

Aphrodite. And Ms Straffon cites a suitably inappropriate authority to support her suggestion: 'a notice above the chair in the makes the pagan/Goddess origins of the Mermaid quite explicit.'

These examples are not isolated - almost every page provides examples where, at best, one feels the evidence is being stretched too far at the expense of alternative interpretations. All too often, the reader is left floundering. For instance, still in the Cornwall section, Ms Straffon discusses the Padstow May Day 'Obby 'Oss. 'Reference to the Oss goes back as far as 1346-7, and is undoubtedly much older than that.' Unfortunately no reference is given for this arresting statement. Bear in mind that the earliest known documentary reference to the Padstow 'Oss is merely 1803, although there may have been a hobby horse elsewhere in Cornwall in 1504 (see a letter from Andy Norfolk in *At the Edge* No.4). While the residents of Padstow were most likely to have been celebrating May Day in 1346-7, it is a prodigiously early date for a hobby horse in folk customs, given that the earliest-known reference to hobby horses anywhere in Britain is in the Wardrobe Accounts of Edward III for 1334-5. Without knowing the basis for the author's claims I cannot dismiss her suggestion, but I still need convincing that the Padstow 'Oss is much older than the nineteenth century, and serious convincing that it was 'undoubtedly much older' than the fourteenth century.

Overall, in *The Earth Goddess* there is much information on specific sites which is either new or has only previously been published in obscure earth mysteries magazines and I congratulate the author on bringing this wealth of information together. This basic information is unfortunately thoroughly intermingled with too much dubious interpretation. On the one hand, this 'interpretation'

will be accepted uncritically by a large number of modern day pagans as it fits in exceedingly well with their 'belief system'. On the other hand, those who do not wholeheartedly share this belief system will probably share my frustration with the extent to which Ms Straffon has 'backprojected' (to use a convenient term already used in Alby Stone's review) modern viewpoints onto an equivocal historical reality.

I am grateful that Ms Straffon has given this disputed subject her 'best shot' and presented such a comprehensive case for an Earth Goddess in the British Isles. My opinions are clear from the above remarks, but nevertheless I feel *The Earth Goddess* is a book which should be read so that each reader can form their own verdict. If nothing else, the gazetteer will provide plenty of examples of little-known 'scared sites' to inspire some outings.

Bob Trubshaw

Janet Bord

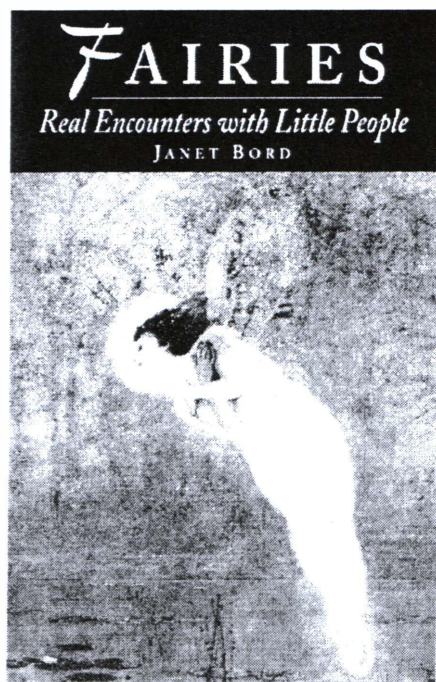
FAIRIES

Real Encounters with Little People

Michael O'Mara 1997
242 x 155 mm, 182 pages,
illustrated, hardback £15.99

Despite the glowing, gossamer-winged romantic cover illustration, this is *not* a book about the fanciful notions of fairies put about by children's books. Rather, Janet Bord attempts to summarise the widespread personal testimonies for encounters with apparently real 'Little People' throughout the British Isles and further afield. These 'Little People' can be shape shifters, and are often capricious or downright malevolent.

How 'real' these encounters are is a matter for debate, and the author takes no sides. Instead, she shows the close parallels with other 'paranormal' experiences, such as UFO



sightings and ghosts - suggesting that 'aliens' are perhaps 'high-tech' fairies.

While the objective reality of fairies may remain an open question, by recognizing that the traditional 'fairy tales' are a reflection of something unusual, Janet Bord reveals that there is are surprisingly consistent themes to these widespread tales.

The whole subject of fairies has long needed a considered overview and, by adopting a good balance of open-minded 'belief' and critical scepticism, Janet Bord has provided exactly what was needed.

Bob Trubshaw

Jeremy Harte

RESEARCH IN GEOMANCY

1990-1994

A bibliography

Heart of Albion Press 1997
Published on disc (PC or Mac)
£5.95

or disc and print out (A4, 65
pages) £14.95

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What an absolutely terrific
idea this bibliography is, and
how very well executed! In
*Research in Geomancy
1990-1994*, the inimitable
Jeremy Harte has given those of
us with an interest in sacred
space a wonderful and
much-needed resource.

Readers of *At the Edge* will
no doubt be familiar with
Harte's prodigious knowledge of
matters geomantic, and with his
gently witty, incisive style. These
magic ingredients combine here
to provide a reference volume
that is both highly informative
and actually fun to read. The
prefatory essay, 'About
Geomancy', is observant and to
the point, the notes for users are
clear, and the comments about
source material are edifying and
succinct. Works such as this,
necessarily broken up into small
sections, are rarely elegant or
fluid in their commentary, but
this bibliography is eminently
browsable; Harte carries it all
off with a sense of effortlessness
which disguises the intensive
labour necessary to a project of
this kind.

The content is well-chosen
and wide-ranging, including
references for papers from 33
periodicals (from the core earth
mysteries journals to *World
Archaeology* and *Current
Anthropology*) and umpteen
books. The chapters are as
follows: Histories and
Perspectives, Famous Places,
Local Studies, Natural Shrines,
Monuments, Patterns,
Experiencing the Sacred,
Symbolic Landscapes,
Cosmology, Rituals, Visions, and
Energies. It is most refreshing
for this archaeologist to see
works from areas as traditionally
distant as the study of British
prehistory, North American
native cosmology, ancient and
modern ritual, historic English
gardens, and mythology brought
together into a coherent whole.

There is an important
message behind *Research in
Geomancy 1990-1994*: that the
subject of sacred space truly
requires multidisciplinary study,

and the exploration of different
bodies of work brings rewards.
As Harte observes in his opening
remarks, the literature from
disparate academic fields (e.g.
folklore, anthropology, and
archaeology) does have a
tendency to 'separate out, like
the oil and vinegar in a dressing',
and so a deliberate effort to
shake them together can be
necessary at times. In this case,
the mixing of flavours has
resulted in a delectable
concoction. Of course, there will
always be those who complain
because the research of this
author or that is not included, or
that site X or culture Y has not
been mentioned; this would
hardly seem fair comment,
however, on a work such as this,
which makes no claim to be
absolutely comprehensive, yet is
such an excellent beginning.

The presentation is just as
strong as the content. In keeping
with Heart of Albion Press's
exploration of new ways of
publishing, this bibliography is
available in two formats: a
printed version, and a floppy
disk. I like the latter very much,
because of the flexibility it
permits the reader. It is certainly
easy to use - just pop the disk in,
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scanning for particular terms by
using your own software's search
function if desired. The
specifications of this
computerised version are
well-considered; rather than
making it inaccessible to many
readers through the use of
state-of-the-art programming
(e.g. a hypertext document with
a built-in search engine), Harte
and Heart of Albion elected for
simplicity, providing the text of
the bibliography in a
straightforward style and
universally readable format.

*Research in Geomancy
1990-1994* is a remarkable
resource and a pleasure as well.
It is my sincere hope that Harte
will continue this project,
compiling material from
successive years to add to this
solid foundation.

Kathryn Denning

Terence Meaden

STONEHENGE: THE SECRET OF THE SOLSTICE

Souvenir 1997

258 x 190 mm, 168 pages, fully illustrated including colour plates, hardback £18.99, paperback £12.99

Despite the author's prefatory remarks, *Stonehenge: The Secret of the Solstice* is best regarded as a lightly reworked new edition of *The Stonehenge Solution* which appeared in 1992. Given the close similarities of the content, I was minded to reread my review of the previous book (Trubshaw 1992) to see how much my opinions might have changed over five years, especially given that since 1992 there has been an entirely unexpected 'opening up' of academic approaches to archaeological interpretation, and a great deal of reassessment of thinking by many 'non-vocational' researchers.

Back in 1992 I panned the first three chapters of *The Stonehenge Solution* as being 'woolly' because 'page after page asserts the supremacy of the Great Goddess in the Neolithic period but based only on uncriticised secondary sources.' In this respect nothing has improved in this edition (although the criticism of the concept of a widespread Neolithic Goddess cult has greatly intensified since 1992) so let us move swiftly on to where Meaden discusses the 'Sky God'.

In the *Mercian Mysteries* review I expressed cautious excitement about Meaden's suggestion that 'The tornado is the Celestial Bull . . . - the whirling funnel of a tornado does indeed bear more than a passing resemblance to the most masculine part of a bull and the ritual significance of bulls shows some (but not exclusive) links with early Sky Gods. So far, quite an interesting suggestion. However, Meaden then suggests

that cursuses were laid out to mark the path of passing tornadoes. Since 1992 there have been a number of studies of cursuses and excavations suggest they were created in short sections over a number of years. The suggestion that cursuses mark the path of tornadoes is about as plausible as suggesting that crop circles are made by passing UFOs; this is one part of the book which should have been changed as it seriously inhibits any attempt to take the author's other ideas seriously.

The one part of *The Stonehenge Solution* which had some merit is the suggestion that the Heel Stone at Stonehenge casts a phallic-shaped shadow which, at the summer solstice sunrise, penetrates the vulva-shaped trilithons and into the womb-like 'Horseshoe'. In this section of *Stonehenge: The Secret of the Solstice* Meaden has added supplementary information, not least to address some of the criticisms made by Aubrey Burl (Burl 1992). Archaeoastronomy has undergone something of a revival since 1992 and one of the key developments is that now there is more to ancient astronomy than merely looking for solar, lunar or stellar events linked to 'horizon markers'. Meaden was one of the first to show that archaeologists, both amateur and professional, had too often been 'looking down the wrong end'.

In an attempt to support this observation, Meaden has identified numerous phallic and

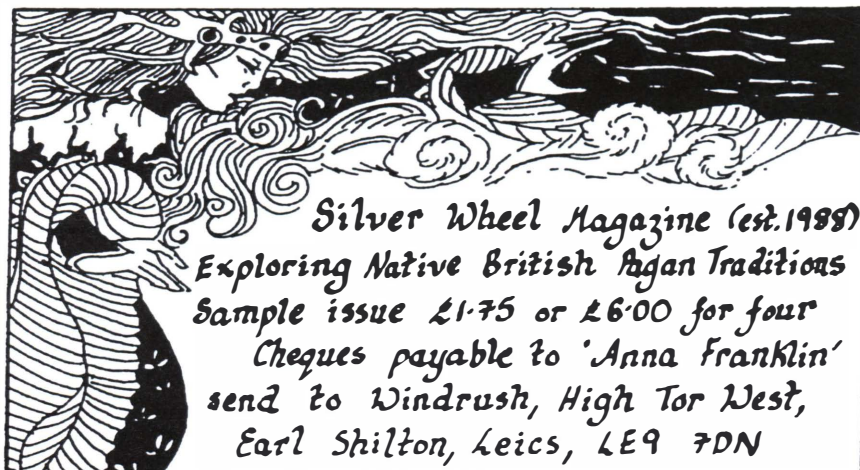
vulva stones at British megalithic sites, and drawn comparisons to the large numbers of prehistoric images from around the world which may be interpreted as showing a 'ritual marriage'. All the evidence is by association, covering an eclectic mix of cultures and time-scales. In the end the author is simply saying more about modern day mentalities towards 'sexual symbolism' than about anything in the minds of the creators of Stonehenge.

Meaden has put into *Stonehenge: The Secret of the Solstice* the fruits of his research and rethinking since *The Stonehenge Solution* was published five years ago; but the changes are at the level of adding or amending detail here and there. Far from catching up with the ideas of academe over the intervening five years, Meaden provides no reasons to retract the reservations which I felt in 1992. Instead, I find myself in full agreement with the closing remarks of Aubrey Burl's 1992 review in *Antiquity*: 'The *Stonehenge Solution* is an over-confident fantasia offering some acceptable archaeology and some provocative ideas but with a thesis that tempts but does not overcome because the evidence lacks penetration.'

Bob Trubshaw

References:

- BURL, Aubrey, 1992. Review of *The Stonehenge Solution* in *Antiquity* Vol.66 p987-8.
TRUBSHAW, R.N., 1992. Review of *The Stonehenge Solution* in *Mercian Mysteries* No.12 p38-40



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Michael Parker
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Colin Richards (eds)
**ARCHITECTURE
AND ORDER**

**Approaches to
social space**

Routledge
233 x 155 mm, 248 pages,
illustrated, paperback, £14.99

This book originally appeared in 1994 and has now been reprinted as a paperback. Astute readers of *At the Edge* will recall that part of one chapter (on Neolithic houses on Orkney) was reprinted in *At the Edge* No.5. However, the scope of the contributions includes other ideas relating to the British Neolithic and Bronze Age, plus chapters devoted to the social architecture of Greece, Rome, Swahili and Mali.

The book's intended readership is fellow academics and not all the contributors can be considered as natural communicators. However, overall this book is far more accessible than many academic publications. Since the book's original publication there has been an increase in interest in how perceptions of architecture, space and time represent and order the world - and an increasing awareness that these perceptions vary considerably in different cultures.

The introductory chapter by the editors, together with their more detailed study of the structuring of space in prehistory, should be essential reading for those who are interested in the 'core topics' of *At the Edge*. The availability of this book as a paperback is most welcome.

Bob Trubshaw

John Collis
**THE EUROPEAN
IRON AGE**

Routledge
247 x 188 mm, 192 pages,
fully illustrated, paperback
£19.99

This book was originally published by Batsford in 1984 but has been reprinted by Routledge as a paperback. It might be thought that an archaeology book first published 13 years ago will now be well past its sell-by date. Indeed, there have been plenty of studies of aspects of the European Iron Age in the intervening years, but the strength of *The European Iron Age* is that the author manages to present a broad view of Phoenician, Greek, Etruscan and Roman civilisations of the era alongside the central European Iron Age cultures. The social, economic and cultural interactions between these civilisations during the first millennium BC culminated in the Roman Empire.

This is one of the rare books which succeeds in concisely covering an exceptionally wide scope without getting bogged down in the details. It is perhaps for this reason that the absence of archaeological discoveries since 1984 have not become a noticeable weakness. All credit to the author, therefore, that this work still remains an excellent introduction. There is much more which *could* be said about the European Iron Age, but for readers with little prior knowledge this book is an effective introduction, although the price is excessive for a paperback without any colour illustrations.

Bob Trubshaw

Geoffrey Ashe
**THE TRAVELLER'S
GUIDE TO
ARTHURIAN
BRITAIN**

Gothic Image 1997
213 x 110 mm, 250 pages,
illustrated, paperback, £12.95

This book is a reprint of a book first seen in 1980 and provides a useful gazetteer of places which link, through their name or fable, with Arthur and the fantasy Camelot team.

Together with the companion volume by John Michell, *The Traveller's Guide to Sacred England* (reprinted by Gothic Image last year), these guide books are far better than many which have been produced since and their return into print is most welcome.

Bob Trubshaw

Laurence Main
CAMLAN

The True Story?

Meirion Publications 1997.
A5 landscape, 24 pages, card
covers £2.50
From Meirion Publications, Dinas
Mawddwy, Machynlleth, SY20
9LS (add 30p p&p); *Camlan - the
true story?* and *Arthur's Camlan*
are available together for £5.00
incl. p&p.

A very personal approach to the landscape of Dinas Mawddwy and the Battle of Camlan, based on detailed knowledge of the legends of Arthur, a series of dreams by the author, and parallel 'psychic questing' by two other people who (at the relevant times) the author did not know. As the author states, 'Such tales are not always readily accepted'

This short account is a sequel to Main's previous booklet, *Arthur's Camlan* (Raymond Street 1989). These really need

to be read together to grasp the 'full picture' of this individual approach to the landscape. In the final analysis, *all* concepts of landscape and mythology are created in our minds; in *Camlan - the true story?* the mental processes are given much greater prominence than in most written accounts of places. Different readers will engage in entirely different ways with the account which Main retells. Some will want to 'rationalise it all away', others might find it easy to accept all at face value, but most will find any number of middle grounds between these extremes. The reader, inevitably, will form his own 'reality' about this localised 'mindscape'. Does all this sound like Main has written a 'post-modernist guidebook'? Read these two booklets for yourselves and join in the myth making.

Bob Trubshaw

Thirlie Grundy

THE MISERICORD CARVER OF HEXHAM ABBEY, NORTHUMBER- LAND

Thumbprint 1997

A5, 15 pages, illustrated, card covers, £1.95

Available post free in UK from Thumbprint, The Studio, 11 Lodore Drive, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 7SG; cheques payable to 'T. Grundy'.

Thirlie Grundy has previously published four booklets on the misericords in the cathedrals at Carlisle, Newcastle upon Tyne, Chester and Exeter. The format of this series includes small but clear drawings of each carving together with far-reaching interpretation of the symbolism and imagery.

Most of the misericords at Hexham Abbey date to around 1425, so are among the oldest in Britain. Ms Grundy confronts

the consensus of opinion that 'misericord carvers were illiterate apprentices' and, instead, offers an exegesis which shows the Hexham carver 'to have been a master conscious of the traditions laid down by his predecessors . . . He carved his pagan world in his own meticulous and methodical way by dividing its cultural divisions into male and female, black and white, and good and bad.'

As with previous booklets in this series, the interpretation borrows little from academic medieval studies and instead draws on sources such as J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and W. Anderson's *Green Man* which need to be treated a great deal more cautiously than the brief text allows. As a result, there is much in the interpretation which could be debated at length, but this is to distract from the main achievement of this series of little booklets, which re-awaken interest in this rich world of medieval art.

Bob Trubshaw

INTERNATIONAL PAGAN PATHWALKERS

Vol.1 Summer 1997

A4, 58 pages, £5 or US\$10 (in bank notes) post paid from: Ikari Segawara, 7-22-4 Minamisyoma-Cho, Tokushima City, 770 Japan.

Although subtitled 'International Pagan Magazine from Japan', this is *not* about traditional Japanese 'paganism', such as Shinto, but reflects the growing interest in Western modern-day paganism in the Far East. The first issue of *The International Pagan Pathwalkers* sets a high standard for breadth and depth of content, even if the appearance is best described as adequate. A scan through some of the titles of articles will confirm this: 'Pagan futures' (by Michael Howard), 'Paganism in Japan', 'Life with Grandma the

Witch', 'Paganism in Finland', 'Art in the Feri Tradition of Africa', 'Defining Chaos Magick', 'Tamang Bon shamanism in Nepal' and 'Some thoughts on faerie'.

Not all articles are entirely sympathetic to modern pagan beliefs, as my article on 'Paganism in British folk customs' from *At the Edge* No.3 is reprinted and Jack Gale's contribution is entitled 'Glastonbury: Ancient Avalon or dustbin of delusions?'.

And this is only about one-third of the articles making up no less than 58 'fact filled' A4 pages. Overall, this issue provides an exciting cross-section of beliefs and well-informed opinions in the pagan world at this time. Now that *Talking Stick* has dropped to one or two issues per year there is scope for another 'in depth' pagan magazine and I hope that Ikari Segawara will be able to sustain a regular schedule for *The International Pagan Pathwalkers*. Encourage him by buying a copy of this issue - it's well worth the fiver.

Bob Trubshaw

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AT THE EDGE

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Jeremy Harte: Under the greenwood tree
Frank Earp: The wise men of Gotham
Bob Trubshaw: Exploring past and place
Eric Fitch: Ancient Taplow

Major articles in **At the Edge No.2** (June 1996):

Jeremy Harte: Churches moved by night
Alby Stone: A pagan Gothic ritual
Bob Trubshaw: The fifth direction - sacred centres in Ireland
Michael Behrend: Oxhide myths
Bob Trubshaw: Exploring past and place - where next?(report on TAG95)

Major articles in **At the Edge No.3** (September 1996):

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Valtars Grivins: Short report on discoveries at Krivkalns
Gavin Smith: Recovering the lost religious place-names of England
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Jeremy Harte: Herne the Hunter - a case of mistaken identity

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Ruth Wylie: The Green Man - variations on the theme
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Mike Parker Pearson and Colin Richards: Late neolithic Orcadian houses
Jeremy Harte: Hollow hills

Major articles in **At the Edge No.6** (June 1997)

Bob Trubshaw Beyond Indiana Jones versus the Mother Goddess
Lynn Meskell Constructing sex and gender in archaeology
Hilda Davidson Women on the Rampage
Susan Evasdaughter A sacred island (bronze age Crete)
Bob Trubshaw Weaving the world
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Jeremy Harte Pussycat, pussycat, where have you been? (witches and their familiars)

Major articles in **At the Edge No.7** (September 1997):

Nigel Pennick Leys as ideology
Alby Stone A dream world? Archaeology and the Indo-European world view
Jeremy Harte Blood and soil - the tribe in early English history
Gavin Smith A lost class of central places
Bob Trubshaw Making time
Jon Appleton Rhiannon rides on Uffington White Horse
Terence Meaden Shinto torii arches and the trilithons of Stonehenge

A few back issues are also available for *At the Edge's* 'predecessor' - *Mercian Mysteries*. These cost £1.50 each or £5.00 for the set of five or £1.00 each if ordered with *At the Edge* back issues.

All issues A4 format. The following summarises major articles only and excludes reviews, 'Outlines', letters and brief notes.

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No. 21 Monuments as ideas; Goddess or queen? - Braunston [Rutland] enigmatic carving; Animism in Hebrew religion part 1: sacred trees; Toot hills; St Ann's well, Nottingham; South Warwickshire field trip; Celtic fallacy forgone

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